

Mexico Gets Ready  
to Rumble, p.11

Bloomberg's  
Williamsburg Wall, p.4

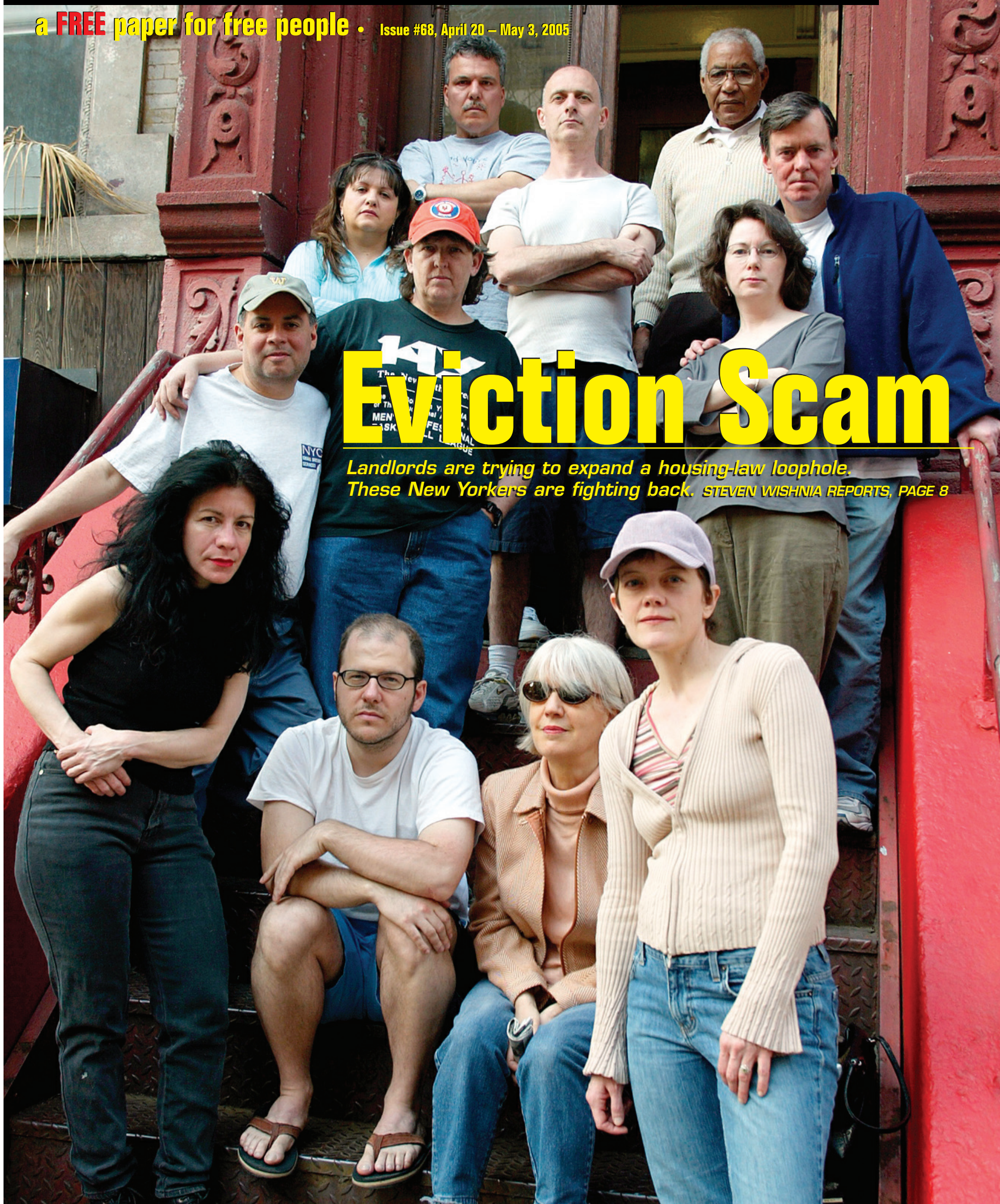
Minutemen: White Fright  
on the Arizona Border, p.5

# THE INDYPENDENT

a **FREE** paper for free people • Issue #68, April 20 – May 3, 2005

## Eviction Scam

Landlords are trying to expand a housing-law loophole.  
These New Yorkers are fighting back. STEVEN WISHNIA REPORTS, PAGE 8







## NEW YORK CITY INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER

**Phone:**  
212.684.8112

**Email:**  
imc-nyc-print@indymedia.org

**Web:**  
indypendent.org  
NYC: nyc.indymedia.org  
U.S.: us.indymedia.org  
GLOBAL: indymedia.org

**Office and Mail:**  
NYC Independent Media Center  
34 E. 29th St. 2nd Floor  
NY, NY 10016

### WHAT IS INDYMEDIA?

With autonomous chapters in more than 120 cities throughout the world, the Independent Media Center is an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to analyze issues affecting individuals, communities and ecosystems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate. We espouse open dialogue and placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

*The Indypendent* is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

### WHAT CAN I DO TO GET INVOLVED?

The IMC has an open door. You can write for *The Indypendent*, film events and rallies, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

### VOLUNTEER STAFF:

Kat Aaron, Chris Anderson, Silvia Arana, Jay Bachhuber, Caitlin Benedetto, Bennett J. Baumer, Jed Brandt, Kazembe Bulagoon, Mike Burke, Leigh Ann Caldwell, Antrim Caskey, Rahul Chadha, Susan Chenelle, Ellen Davidson, Ryan Dunsmuir, Miguel Erb, Chiam Garcia, Alfredo Garzon, Neela Ghoshal, Lauren Giambrone, David Gochfeld, Maggie Gram, A.K. Gupta, Ruth Kelton, Ida Lake, F. Timothy Martin, Edgar Mata, Nik Moore, Lydia Neri, Ana Nogueira, Donald Paneth, James Powell, Derq Quiqqle, Frank Reynoso, Ann Schneider, Mike Schuwerk, Andy Smenos, Andrew Stern, Catriona Stuart, Maggie Suisman, John Tarleton, Xavier Tayo, Liz Tillotson, Leanne Tory-Murphy, Matthew Wasserman, Steven Wishnia, Jennifer Whitney, and Amy Wolf

**COVER PHOTO  
BY ANTRIM CASKEY**

**CORRECTION:** In Issue #67, the page 3 photo from a protest by the Alliance for Quality Education should have been credited to Megan Joplin.

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR april-may

## THE INDYPENDENT

has open meetings every Tuesday at 7 pm at 34 E. 29th St., 2nd fl.

### APRIL 20-APRIL 28

**THE 12TH ANNUAL NEW YORK AFRICAN FILM FESTIVAL**  
24 films from 12 countries.  
154 W. 18th St., Ste. #2A, Manhattan, 212.352.1720  
www.africanfilmny.org for schedule

### THU APRIL 21

7 pm • FREE  
**READING: DR. PATTI FEUEREISEN**  
Breaking open taboo discussions, Feureisen's *Invisible Girls: The Truth About Sexual Abuse* is a pioneering work about sexual abuse and healing.  
Bluestockings Bookstore, 172 Allen, Manhattan  
www.bluestockings.com

### FRI APRIL 22

8-10 am • FREE  
**WE ACT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AWARDS**  
Awards for substantial inroads to preserve the natural and built environment and improve environmental health in communities of color.  
Synod House, Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. & 110th St., Manhattan

7 pm • FREE  
**READING: SOUTHERN GIRLS DO IT BETTER**  
Georgia native Tayari Jones reads from her new novel, *The Untelling*.  
Bluestockings Bookstore, 172 Allen, Manhattan  
www.bluestockings.com

### SUN APRIL 24

2 pm • FREE  
**SAVE THE WILLIAMSBURG WATERFRONT RALLY!**  
Free food, treasure hunts, pirate radio, guerilla gardening, kite flying, music by the Hungry Marching Band.  
Grant & River Sts., Williamsburg, Brooklyn

7 pm • \$5  
**CELEBRATING RATTAPALLAX MAGAZINE**  
The ABC No Rio Reading Series  
Featuring: Colette Inez, Edwin Torres, Matvei Yankelevich.

Gallery/Performance Space, 156 Rivington Street, (between Clinton & Suffolk), Manhattan

### TUES APRIL 26

6-8 pm • FREE  
**MULTIPLYING NUCLEAR DANGERS: CAN THE NONPROLIFERATION REGIME MEET THE CHALLENGE?**  
A forum sponsored by the New York County Lawyers' Association and Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy  
NYCLA Home of Law, 14 Vesey Street, Manhattan

7 pm • \$3-\$5 Suggested donation  
**PERFORMANCE: WOMEN'S POETRY JAM & OPEN-MIC**  
Featuring: Jeanne Marie Beaumont and Lisa Rhoades  
Bluestockings Bookstore, 172 Allen, Manhattan  
www.bluestockings.com

7:30 pm (all showings) • FREE  
**ARTS FOR PEACE FILM FORUM**  
**April 27:** Why the U.S. can't get out of the Arab World  
**May 22:** Control Room  
**May 25:** Unconstitutional: The war on our civil liberties  
Common lounge at the International Student Center, 38 W. 88th St., Manhattan

### APRIL 27-MAY 11

Three consecutive Wednesdays 7-8:30 pm • FREE (\$5 for class hand-outs)  
**ZINES 101**  
How to make, publish and distribute zines.  
ABC No Rio Zine Library (2nd floor), 156 Rivington St. (between Clinton & Suffolk), Manhattan

### THROUGH APRIL 30

10 am-6 pm Sun: 1-5 pm  
**IN MOTION: THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN MIGRATION EXPERIENCE**  
Exhibit tells the story of how movement over the last 500 years, both coerced and willing, inspired a culture and shaped a nation.  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Exhibition Hall, 515 Malcolm X Blvd., Manhattan

### THU APRIL 28

6:30-7:30 pm • FREE  
**OPEN MEETING AT DYKE TV**  
Writers, producers, directors and video makers - your creativity is needed for the longest running TV

show for the LGBTQ Nation.  
Dyke-TV Office, 71 Fifth Ave., Brooklyn

6 pm • FREE  
**BIKE MECHANIC SKILLSHARE**  
Sponsored by Times Up!  
49 E. Houston St. (between Mott & Mulberry), Manhattan

### FRI APRIL 29

7 pm • FREE  
**CRITICAL MASS: MANHATTAN**  
Union Sq. Park North, Manhattan

8 pm • FREE  
**RELEASE PARTY FOR WOBBLIES! A GRAPHIC HISTORY OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD.**  
VoxPop, 1022 Cortelyou Rd., Brooklyn, 718-940-2084  
voxpopnet.net

### SAT APRIL 30

7 pm • FREE  
**COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE SOCIAL**  
The Stanton Street Settlement CSA is signing up members to purchase shares in this year's harvest. Please join us for an informational session about our CSA.  
53 Stanton St., Manhattan, 212-375-0859

1 pm • FREE  
**FULL SPECTRUM RESISTANCE: AN INT'L SPACE ORGANIZING FORUM**  
Leading space disarmament activists from around the world.  
Musicians Union Hall, 322 W. 48th St., Manhattan, 207-729-0517

### SUN MAY 1

1 pm • FREE  
**MAY DAY MARCH**  
May Day is International Workers Day. March organized by the Troops Out Now Coalition and the Million Worker March, will demand, "Bring the Troops Home Now! Jobs with a Living Wage for All!"  
Union Sq. Park, Manhattan

12-6 pm • FREE  
**NO NUKES, NO WARS**  
Rally for nuclear abolition, against preventive war, and for an end to the Iraq war.  
Assemble 1st Ave. from 50th St. north  
11 am-12 noon. March at 12 noon.  
Rally 2-6 pm at the Heckscher Ballfields in Central Park, Manhattan  
abolitionnow.org, unitedforpeace.org

### MAY 2-3

Location and times TBA • \$15/day \$25/weekend  
**CAPOEIRA ANGOLA WORKSHOPS WITH MESTRE COBRA MANSA**  
puck@roarmeow.com, 917-971-7980  
www.roarmeow.com/capoeiraangola.htm

### THU MAY 5

8 pm • FREE  
**MOVIE NIGHT AT TIME'S UP! Battle Royale** (Batoru rowaiaru, 2000), Government program takes ninth-grade students to an island where they must fight each other until only one remains.  
Space, 49 E. Houston St. (between Mott & Mulberry).

### FRI MAY 6

7:30 pm • \$5  
**DYSTOPIAN VISIONS WITH CHARLTON HESTON**  
Screening in modern video! *The Omega Man*, *Planet of the Apes*, *Soylent Green*. Benefit for ABC No Rio Computer Center.  
Gallery/Performance Space, 156 Rivington St. (between Clinton & Suffolk), Manhattan

### SUN MAY 8

10 am • Registration: \$12 before April 28, \$15 after April 28  
**CINCO DE MAYO 5K RUN LIVE MUSIC-MARIACHI PUEBLA**  
Prospect Park, Brooklyn (rain or shine); race starts at Bartel Pritchard Sq. (15th St. & Prospect Park West)

### SAT MAY 14

**IT'S MY PARK! DAY**  
Join thousands of New Yorkers caring for and celebrating parks in all five boroughs. Clean-up and restoration projects, free cultural events.  
www.itsmypark.org or call 311.

### SAT MAY 14-SUN MAY 15

10 am-5 pm • \$125 per workshop  
**PAPER TIGER WORKSHOPS**  
Two-day intensive training in digital video editing with Final Cut Pro.  
Paper Tiger, 339 Lafayette St., Manhattan

### SATURDAYS

12:15 pm-1:15 pm • FREE  
**VIGIL AT ARMED SERVICES RECRUITMENT CENTER**  
36-40 Main St., Flushing, 718-757-2823  
naomipaz@nyc.rr.com

*don't miss an issue*  
**SUBSCRIBE  
TODAY**

**JUST \$25 A YEAR**  
to stay on top of the news and  
the movement for global justice.

☐ Bill me

☐ Check enclosed

Name

Address

City

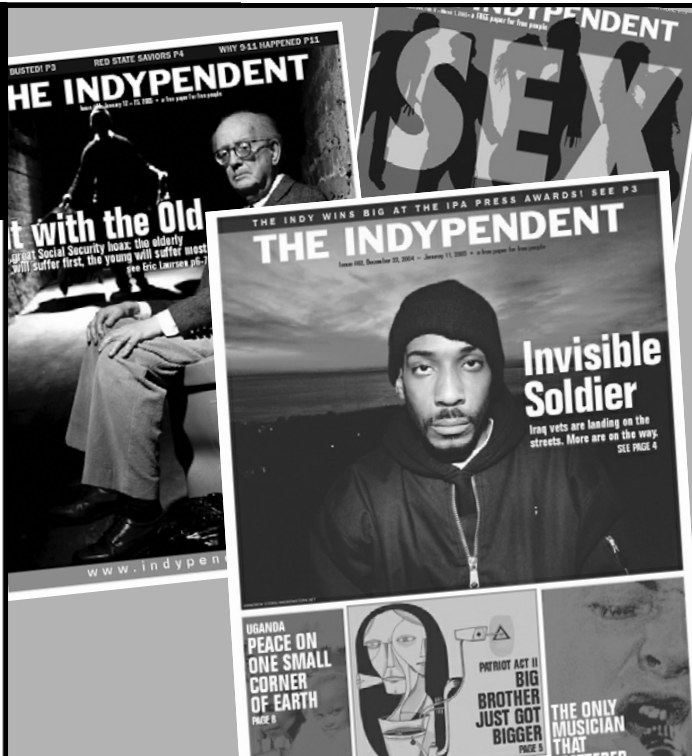
State

Zip

E-Mail

Phone

Subscription rate: \$25/year (23 issues) Make checks payable to the NYC IMC Print Team and send to: 34 East 29th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10016. Or for even faster service email your address to indysubs@yahoo.com and we will begin your subscription right away!





ANTRIM CASKEY

## Ralph Klaber

1948–2005

Ralph Klaber, a tireless community activist who was always willing to do the grunt work and who distributed *The Independent* in Washington Heights, passed away on March 29. He was 56.

# Canners Seek Redemption

PHOTOS AND TEXT BY ANTRIM CASKEY

If you put a bunch of soda and beer cans in a bag and go to a supermarket or drugstore where these items are sold, the New York State “bottle bill” guarantees you a five-cent return deposit per container. Many homeless people rely on redeeming cans and bottles for their livelihood. But most stores do not comply with the law, which says they have to take up to 240 containers of brands that they sell.

Led by the Canners Committee of the homeless advocacy group Picture the Homeless, about 30 canners and supporters marched on April 13 to the Associated supermarket on Second Avenue and East 48th Street to protest the stores that refuse to take 240 containers.

“D’Agostino is the only one that really takes 240,” said John Z, a canner for about seven years. “Associated and Gristedes, they only take about 20-40.” At five cents a can, that’s \$12 for a full load of 240, which generally fills one large garbage bag.

“You can’t take your cans with you in the shelter or drop in center,” explained John Robert Jones. “You don’t want to, after working six or seven hours, to babysit the cans overnight. You want to get rid of them.”

At the Associated supermarket, four men with garbage bags slung over their shoulders walked into the store and asked to turn in



From top left: Eugene Gadsden bringing in the haul. Ana Martinez DeLuco says canning makes it easier “to live with less.” Eugene Gadsden and Jean Rice are both longtime members of Picture the Homeless who have been canning for twenty years.

their cans, while the rest of the group stayed outside. The store manager refused to take any cans. The men began to argue.

When the police arrived, an officer named McCann spoke to the manager and then ordered all the canners to leave the store. He said that they could come back in, one at a time, and redeem 20-30 cans each. The canners erupted in anger.

“It’s a civil matter,” McCann explained, when asked about the law requiring stores to accept up to 240 containers per person per day. “The store has its own policies that are separate and distinct.”

Mary Moore, director of public affairs for



D’Agostino Supermarkets, characterized the canners as “a sympathetic lot,” but said the volume of redemption places a serious burden on grocery stores — especially on D’Agostino’s, which was sued about 15 years ago and as a result, is one of the few major chains that complies with the law.

In 2001-02, she said, D’Agostino supermarkets in the city and Westchester took in 19.6 million cans. The company sold 8.8 million returnable containers, collecting \$440,000 in deposits. D’Agostino receives two cents for each container as a handling fee, but paid out more than \$1.1 million in return deposits and processing costs, for a total net loss of \$285,000

— about 1.5 cents for every can it took in.

Another issue, Moore added, is “sanitation,” both of the people who return cans and of storing dirty cans and bottles in a food store.

Markus Frensch from Picture the Homeless said the canners are mostly people who have difficulty finding regular jobs: some because they have felony records, some because of their immigration status, and some who had jobs that evaporated, like the older Chinese women who used to work in textile factories.

John Robert Jones fondly recalls WE CAN, a nonprofit organization that helps people collect and redeem bottles for redemption. WE CAN lost its former redemption space on West 52nd Street last October.

The state’s bottlers keep from \$88 to \$140 million each year in unclaimed deposits from cans and bottles that are not redeemed, according to estimates by the state environmental department and NYPIRG. Over the past 20 years, NYPIRG says, the bottle bill has kept more than five million tons of plastic, glass, and metal out of landfills and incinerators.

A bill now in the state Assembly would extend the deposit to water and juice bottles, and would require the beverage industry to return all unclaimed deposits to the state to help fund municipal recycling programs.

# MOST RNC CHARGES DROPPED

## City to Pay Fines, Cops Caught Doctoring Video

BY MATT WASSERMAN

Over seven months after the Republican National Convention, evidence of police misconduct against protesters is finally coming to the fore. A front-page story in the *New York Times* on April 12 largely confirmed allegations, raised by contributors to NYC Indymedia over four months ago, that at least one police officer had committed perjury and that videos of arrests had been “edited.”

On April 15, the city settled contempt of court charges for holding protesters over 24 hours before arraigning them, in violation of two court orders, for the sum of \$230,000. The same day, prosecutors dropped charges against Josh Banno, who was originally accused of seven felonies and held in lieu of \$200,000 bail. Banno had been accused of lighting a giant papier-mâché dragon on fire at the August 29 anti-Bush

demonstration and fighting with police officer Josh Parks, causing third-degree burns, but medical records revealed that Parks had suffered no burns and video evidence showed that Banno had played no part in immolating the dragon.

Footage captured by video activists has led to charges being dropped against over 400 of the 1,806 RNC arrestees, including nonprotesting bystanders who were caught up in police sweeps. Over 90 percent of the 1,670 cases concluded so far have ended with all charges dismissed, ACDs, or a verdict of not guilty.

The Bloomberg administration still has yet to face any consequences for its use of Pier 57, or “Guantanamo on the Hudson,” during the convention. Documents obtained by Indymedia contributor Drew Poe show that the city’s use of Pier 57 as its primary detention center violated its written lease agreement, and that the Hudson River Park Trust, controlling authority for the pier, was aware that the building, a



**SPITTING FIRE:** A papier-mâché dragon burns outside Madison Square Garden last August. Charges were dropped against Josh Banno (inset).

disused bus garage, contained asbestos, lead, and fire hazards. Numerous RNC arrestees have claimed to be suffering from chemical burns and breathing problems as a result of their detention at Pier 57, where they were held in cages with oil-stained floors surrounded by razor wire.

Many of those arrested during the convention plan to file civil suits against the city for violating their civil rights.



# The Brecht Forum On Manhattan's Left Bank

We're opening up in our new home at 451 West Street  
(between Bethune & Bank) in the Far West Village  
with an exciting array of new classes, forums, exhibits,  
performances & popular education workshops.



**& MUCH MUCH MORE**

**A, C, E or L to 14th Street & 8th Ave.** walk down 8th Ave. to Bethune, turn right, walk west to the River, turn left  
**1, 2, 3 or 9 to 14th Street & 7th Ave.** get off at south end of station, walk west on 12th St. to 8th Avenue & follow directions above



**PATH Train to Christopher Street** north on Greenwich Street to Bank Street, left to the river.

**#11 or #20 Bus to Abingdon Square,** west on Bethune

**#14A or 14D Bus to 8th Avenue & 14th Street** walk down 8th to Bethune & west to the river

**#8 Bus to 10th & West Streets**

Full Program Info at

**www.brechtforum.org**



**SAY GOODBYE TO THE VIEW:** Mayor Bloomberg wants to build a wall of highrises here.  
PHOTO: STEVE WISHNIA ART: FRANK REYNOSO/JD

## The Great Wall of Williamsburg

BY RAHUL CHADHA

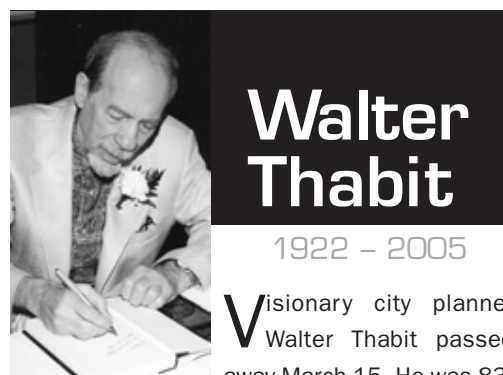
A north Brooklyn business owner recently strung up a few orange balloons on the shore of the East River that stretched 400 feet into the New York sky. The dirigibles served as a wry commentary on the size of buildings that would be allowed under the Bloomberg administration's plans to rezone 175 blocks of Williamsburg and Greenpoint. Irony struck when city officials asked that the balloons be lowered, for fear that they could pose a danger to aviators.

Since a seven-hour public hearing on the rezoning matter was held April 4 at City Hall, activists have been wrangling with their own fair share of gasbags — only the kind that don suits and make stump speeches. Community groups such as the North Brooklyn Alliance and the Greenpoint Waterfront Association for Parks and Planning have been working feverishly to get members of the City Council to consider an alternative to the Bloomberg plan that was developed over several years with the input of Community Board 1, neighborhood organizations and residents.

Hundreds of people opposed to the Bloomberg plan attended the hearing, while dozens who were able to testified before a City Council sub-committee charged with making a recommendation to other council members. The diversity of people and groups that attended the hearing presented a clear, unified front against the Bloomberg plan. "We're all united in that we're getting a bad deal from the city," says Stephanie Thayer, a north Brooklyn resident and opponent of the Bloomberg plan.

Both the media and elected officials have largely seized on the facets of the rezoning plan that deal with percentages of affordable housing. The office of Speaker Gifford Miller, who is in the midst of a mayoral campaign, has withheld support of the Bloomberg plan without presenting an alternative. Councilmember David Yassky, who represents the affected neighborhoods, has commented publicly that he could easily garner the votes to scuttle the plan should provisions for more affordable housing not be made. "I'm confident there will be a clear majority of Council members who will vote against this plan if it doesn't have a genuine affordable-housing component," Yassky told the *New York Daily News*.

Community members are worried that other crucial issues are being ignored. "What we're trying to do is push the full agenda of the coalition," says Julie Lawrence, an organizer with the North Brooklyn Alliance. That agenda includes not only affordable housing, but the creation of more parks and open space, the construction of buildings keeping in context with existing Brooklyn neighborhoods and the preservation of manufacturing and light-indus-



**Walter Thabit**

1922 – 2005

**V**isionary city planner Walter Thabit passed away March 15. He was 83.

Thabit was the founder of Planners for Equal Opportunity, a national planning organization he helped form in 1964. He served as president for eight years. In 2003, Thabit published *How East New York Became A Ghetto*, an unsparing look at how racism creates ghettos and destroys communities.

trial jobs, as four equally important aspects of a rezoning plan.

Meanwhile, the community activists deny as unfounded rumors that their work has been fractured by infighting. "Twenty-five different affordable housing groups within coalitions support [the] reduced height and bulk [of new buildings]," says Thayer. "The actual community leaders all support the same thing."

Back room political maneuvering also seems to have put a damper on activist efforts. The chair of the Zoning & Franchises sub-committee reviewing the plan, Queens Councilman Tony Avella, has been removed from the council's Williamsburg/Greenpoint rezoning team by Speaker Miller, says Beka Economopoulos, a member of the Not An Alternative arts and activist collective. Avella was considered by many groups to be receptive to the community plan as a viable alternative to Bloomberg's. Economopoulos also notes that politicians involved in the rezoning process have been canceling meetings with worrisome frequency.

Proponents of the community plan now face a land-use committee chaired by Melinda Katz, a Queens councilwoman who has a strong track record of supporting developers.

For more information:  
[Communityplan.org](http://Communityplan.org), [Northbrooklynalliance.org](http://Northbrooklynalliance.org),  
[Williamsburgwarriors.org](http://Williamsburgwarriors.org),  
[Nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/greenpointwill/greenoverview.html](http://Nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/greenpointwill/greenoverview.html)



**SHODDY JOURNALISM. CORPORATE CONSOLIDATION.  
GOVERNMENT-FUNDED PROPAGANDA.  
THE MEDIA ARE IN CRISIS. THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW.**

More and more Americans are beginning to understand the impacts of our broken media system. In May, activists, educators, policymakers, scholars, media creators and concerned citizens will converge in St. Louis to learn, strategize, network, and build momentum to fight for reform. Join us.

To register online or for more information,  
**visit [www.freepress.net/conference](http://www.freepress.net/conference).**  
Phone registration available by calling 866-462-2838.



Convened by: **freepress**  
[www.freepress.net](http://www.freepress.net)

# WHITE FRIGHT

## Insecure in Arizona



**MINUTEMEN AT WORK:** April 3, 2005—Minuteman Volunteers get their border watch assignments on a Sunday morning near the Naco Crossing on Palominas, Arizona.  
**PHOTO:** PETER HOLDERNESS

BY GABRIEL THOMPSON

TOMBSTONE, Arizona—A mile from the Mexican border, Jim Gilchrist strode through the makeshift headquarters of the Minuteman Project, located on the campus of the Miracle Valley Bible College. Individuals wearing Minuteman nametags posted maps of the border terrain, fidgeted with electronic equipment and installed numerous antennae on the roof, all under the watchful eye of Gilchrist, the project's primary organizer. Outside, a white flag fluttered in the wind, bearing the emblem of a coiled rattlesnake and two messages for visitors: "Don't Tread on Me" and "Liberty or Death." As armed guards prepared to patrol the area, the church was beginning to resemble a military compound: volunteers referred to what was previously the cafeteria as the "mess hall," the church grounds became "the perimeter."

The buzz of activity on the dusty church campus was the fulfillment of a dream for Gilchrist, 56, a retired accountant and Vietnam War veteran from southern California. Last October he sent out what he now calls the "e-mail heard round the world," asking for volunteers to come to Arizona and become "part of a blocking force against entry into the U.S. by illegal aliens [in order to] protect our country from a 40-year-long invasion."

For Gilchrist, the decision to focus the efforts of the Minutemen in Cochise County was an easy one. Located within the Tucson Sector, Cochise has now become the busiest smuggling route on the U.S.-Mexico border. According to the Border Patrol, 71,282 undocumented immigrants were apprehended in Cochise County from October 2004 through February 2005.

Gilchrist balks at the notion that he is encouraging vigilantism, citing the orders given to participants to maintain a strict "no contact" policy in their dealings with migrants. In what quickly became a favorite sound bite, he described the campaign as simply the largest "neighborhood watch" effort in the country.

But such measures and rhetoric provide little comfort for critics like Jennifer Allen, director of the Tucson-based Border Action Network, the members of which are mostly Latinos living along both sides of the border. Founded in 1999, BAN has been organizing affected residents to demand a government crackdown on the apparently burgeoning vigilante border-patrol movement.

When asked if she thought there was a potential for violence, Allen broke into a grin. "Well, let's see... a bunch of untrained men

coming to the border with firearms for a month — yes, I'd say the potential for violence is there." Indeed, BAN has compiled numerous complaints of vigilante violence against presumed undocumented immigrants prior to the arrival of the Minutemen, and filed several lawsuits against notorious rancher Roger Barnett, who claims to have detained thousands of migrants on his properties.

"...I discovered that it wasn't illegal immigration that ruined the unions. It was the fact that they stopped organizing."

—Bob, volunteer with the Minutemen Project

### VICTIMS AND SCAPEGOATS

As much as has been made of the vigilante-like attitude of the Minutemen, most volunteers simultaneously claimed victimization at the hands of undocumented immigrants. At breakfast on day two of the project, someone placed a stack of T-shirts and stickers on a table for sale. One sticker read, "Kick Me — I'm a Citizen." Those five words seem to summarize the feelings of many participants, who regularly expressed the belief that the United States rewards "aliens" that immigrate illegally while punishing "hard-working" citizens. In their view, a zero-sum battle is underway: whenever an undocumented immigrant receives a job or even medical treatment, a U.S. citizen, somewhere else, is simultaneously being stripped of the same benefit.

A Minuteman named Gabriel, from Freeport, Long Island, decided to volunteer

because hundreds of immigrants there gathered on street corners looking for work, which in his opinion made the area feel like a slum, while driving down wages of citizen construction workers. He has been a union carpenter for many years, but believes he now has less work since contractors are more likely to hire immigrants at well below the prevailing wage.

Another volunteer, Bob, a hefty revolver strapped to his belt, lamented that his son, a former Marine who had fought in the first war against Iraq, could not get a job as a police officer because he doesn't speak Spanish. "He's 6 feet 4 inches, 240 pounds," Bob said, "but no one will hire him because they say he has to be bilingual. Since when do you have to be bilingual in our country?"

Yet even for Bob, who also happens to be a longtime union member, the shrinking power of labor cannot be blamed on undocumented immigrants themselves. He explained that he wrote a dissertation while at the George Meany Labor Center on the effects illegal immigration has on union organizing. "I interviewed labor leaders, border patrol officials, everyone," Bob proudly recalled. "But I discovered that it wasn't illegal immigration that ruined the unions. It was the fact that they stopped organizing."

After breakfast, the Minutemen held protests at the Border Patrol stations of Naco and Douglas, two border towns in Cochise County, to highlight their view that the number of border agents needs to be increased dramatically. Under a sun that quickly turned white faces crimson, protesters lined up with dozens of angry signs demanding action.

### MILITARY SOLUTION

"America First!" "No Benefits for Illegals!" "Stop the Illegal Invasion!" "Close Al-Qaeda Hiking Trails!" "Illegal Aliens, Stop Destroying My Desert!" Most participants saved their harshest criticism for Bush, who had recently labeled them "vigilantes." Many Minutemen posited the belief that Bush is actually under the control of Mexican President Vicente Fox.

Though the complaints of the protesters were as varied as their signs, the unifying theme was expressed on a placard carried by Wes Bramhall, president of Arizonans for Immigration Control: "Dispatch U.S. Army Troops to the Mexico Border." Dozens of participants agreed that a massive buildup along the border was needed.

Back at Minuteman headquarters, the Bible College's president, Dr. Melvin Harter, made a point of noting that the church was officially unaffiliated with the Minutemen. "Don't get me wrong, we are totally in support of their work," he continued, qualifying his disclaimer. "We have to do something about all of the illegals, the drugs, the terrorists."

However, Harter — like every other Minuteman interviewed for this story — could cite no hard evidence in support of the claim of terrorists entering the U.S. through Mexico.

Harter also contends that what it is to be an American citizen today is at risk. "Some people want to open the borders," Harter said. "But if you do that, then pretty soon what makes this country special will be lost. People keep coming and we'll be in the minority, and they'll have more votes than us. And then we're up a creek."

Yet Harter has his pragmatic side. With his church in need of extensive renovation, Harter does see a potential role for Mexicans in the U.S. "I'm not saying that no one can come," he mentioned. "Even now, I couldn't hire an illegal to work here or I'd get in trouble. If we could give them work permits, then they could come here and help fix up this place," he noted, referring to the Bible College. "And then when the work is done, they go home."

*Excerpted from NewStandardNews.net*

**Lower East Side People's Federal Credit Union**  
Your Community Financial Institution  
serving your needs since 1986

**Lending Products**  
Credit Cards  
Personal Loans  
Co-op Loans  
Mortgage Loans  
Business Loans

For more information  
visit us at  
[www.lespfcu.org](http://www.lespfcu.org)  
or call us at  
212.529.8197!

**Financial Products**  
Savings Accounts  
Free Checking  
Share Certificates (CD)  
Business Accounts  
Debit and ATM Cards  
Financial Education

...and More!

**About Your Credit Union:**

- Mission Driven
- Not-For-Profit
- Member Owned
- Community Oriented
- Reinvests money in the community & members
- Friendly and Convenient
- A safe, sound and democratic alternative to traditional banks

**37 Avenue B, New York, NY 10009**  
Tel: 212.529.8197  
Fax: 212.529.8368  
Open: Tues-Fri 10:00-3:00 pm  
Thurs 4:00-7:00 pm  
Sat 10:00-1:00 pm

**134 Avenue C, New York, NY 10009**  
Tel: 212.598.0022  
Fax: 212.598.0288  
Open: Mon, Wed, Fri 1:00-7:00 pm

**WHERE DO I GET MY COPY OF THE INDEPENDENT?**

**BELOW 14TH ST.**  
Bluestockings Books & Café  
172 Allen St.  
Times Up!  
49 E. Houston St.  
Lotus Café  
Clinton & Stanton Sts.  
May Day Books at Theater for the New City  
155 First Ave.  
(Between 9th & 10th Sts.)  
Housing Works  
126 Crosby St.  
LGBT Center  
213 W. 13th St  
Shakespeare & Co. Books  
1 Whitehall St.  
Brecht Forum  
451 West St.

**14TH TO 96TH ST.**  
Revolution Books  
9 W. 19th St.  
Chelsea Sq. Diner  
23rd St. & 9th Ave.  
Second Wave Laundrocenr  
55th St. & 9th Ave.

**ABOVE 96th ST.**  
Labyrinth Books  
536 W. 112th St.  
Kim's Video  
113th St. & Broadway  
Coogan's Bar  
169th St. & Broadway  
BROOKLYN  
Tillie's of Brooklyn  
248 Dekalb Ave.  
Vox Pop  
1022 Corelyou  
Green Apple Café  
110 Dekalb Ave.  
Marquet Patisserie  
680 Fulton St.  
Freddy's Bar and Backroom  
Dean St. & 6th Ave.

Community Book Store  
7th Ave. & Carroll Sts.  
Tea Lounge  
Union St. @ 7th Ave.  
9th St. @ 7th Ave.  
Atlantis Super Laundry Center  
472 Atlantic Ave.  
Photoplay Video  
933 Manhattan Ave.  
Verb Cafe  
Bedford Ave. & N. 5th  
Jane Doe Books  
93 Montrose Ave.  
Make the Road by Walking  
301 Grove St.  
Spoken Word Cafe  
4th Ave. & Union

**QUEENS**  
Sunnyside Library  
43-06 Greenpoint Ave.  
East Elmhurst Library  
95-06 Astoria Blvd.  
Friend's Tavern  
78-11 Roosevelt Ave.  
Langston Hughes Library  
100-01 Northern Blvd.  
Café Aubergine  
49-22 Skillman Ave.  
Sunnyside Library  
43-06 Greenpoint Ave.

**BRONX**  
Bronx Museum  
165th St. & Grand Concourse  
The Point  
940 Garrison Ave.  
Baychester Library  
2049 Asch Loop

**LONG ISLAND**  
Free Space  
Ronkonkoma  
lifreespace.org

**Help distribute the Indy!**  
call 212.684.8112

**A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE**

**THE INDEPENDENT**  
APRIL 20 - MAY 3, 2005  
5



# Exxon Axe

PETRO POLLUTERS USE PATRIOT ACT TO OUST GREEN ADVOCATE IN THE BIG EASY

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

For the past 30 years, the people living amid the chemical plants and oil refineries along the Mississippi River in the blighted area of Louisiana known as Cancer Alley have had one steadfast ally in the halls of a state government that has set the bar for official corruption: Willie Fontenot.

Since 1978, Fontenot has served as the community liaison officer for the Louisiana Attorney General's Office. Over a span of nearly three decades, Fontenot assisted in the creation and organization of more than 400 community and environmental groups in Louisiana and across the Deep South.

But the people of Louisiana's most ravaged communities can no longer turn to Willie Fontenot for help. On April 5, he was dismissed by the state's new attorney general, Charles Foti, a darling of the oil industry. Fontenot says he was told to retire immediately or be fired and risk losing his pension and health insurance. Fontenot retired.

The ouster of Fontenot was a long-sought goal of the oil and chemical junta that controls Louisiana politics. Fontenot had been a thorn in their side for many years and with his help small, impoverished communities with high unemployment and illiteracy rates had begun to stand up for themselves.

In mid-March the oil industry scented blood, when they discovered that Fontenot was serving as a kind of tour guide to Cancer Alley for a group of master's students in environmental science from Antioch College in New Hampshire. Using Homeland Security as a pretext, Fontenot, the students and their two professors were detained by off-duty sheriffs working as security guards for ExxonMobil for taking photographs of the company's chemical plant, one of the most toxic in the nation. That sham arrest was then used as the basis to force Fontenot from his position.

Antioch College's Graduate School of Environmental Studies offers a field program called "Environmental Justice in the Mississippi Delta." Thirteen master's students and two professors were slated to tour the region to interview community leaders, environmentalists, residents and industry executives.

On the group's third day in the field, Fontenot accompanied them to a neighborhood in East Baton Rouge near the ExxonMobil chemical plant, one of the nation's most poisonous. The emissions from the facility are so hazardous that the company was forced to buy out the properties of the entire neighborhood.

"We came to a house directly across from the facility and Willie Fontenot let us know that the woman who lived there had decided not to relocate," said Abigail Abrash Walton, one of the Antioch professors leading the trip. "So we pulled over the van on a side street and the students got out and took photos."

It took only two minutes for the guards to come, wearing official uniforms from the county sheriff's office and the Baton Rouge police department. They were off-duty cops moonlighting as security guards for ExxonMobil.

Fontenot told them that he wasn't the leader of the group and that while the police had a right to question them, they had no right to arrest them.

"I've researched this extensively over the years, because I often give tours for academics and journalists," said Fontenot. "It's perfectly legal to stand on public property and photograph facilities."

When Abigail Walton asked whether a report on the incident was going to be written up, she said one of the rent-a-cops "blew his top." The guard refused to answer her question, but began ranting at the group as if they were a band of eco-terrorists. He threatened to turn them over to the "Homeland Security" people who would detain them well into the night.

An ExxonMobil spokesperson later said that the Maritime Transportation Security Act required the company to file a "suspicious activity report" with the Department of Homeland Security's National Response Center, which is then turned over for investigation by the U.S. Coast Guard. But an official with the Coast Guard brushed this off, saying that it is not illegal to photograph industrial plants from public property.

After about an hour of harassment, the corporate cops finally released the group.

The next day Fontenot was read the riot act at the Attorney General's office and placed on administrative leave. A week later he was told to resign or be terminated.

The Antioch group and the Louisiana Environmental Action Network have set up a fund to raise money so that Fontenot can continue his work. As for the students of Antioch, their harrowing experience was a taste of what environmentalists and community activists deal with every day down in the Delta.

Says Walton, "We got a first-hand glimpse of the type of over-the-top repression that community members and their supporters told us they experience on the frontlines of trying to defend their communities' health and homes in Louisiana."

*Excerpted from counterpunch.org*

## Bye-bye Bull Market



NIK MOORE

# Schwarzenegger Pension Plan Terminated

BY ERIC LAURSEN

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's honeymoon with California voters may have finally ended early this month when he was forced to back off his plan to privatize the state's huge public-employee pension plans. The Governor had threatened to put a proposition on the ballot next year and campaign for it if state lawmakers didn't agree to his plan.

But public opinion polls went against him when the state attorney general — a Democrat — raised the possibility that police and firefighters might lose their death and disability benefits under the Schwarzenegger plan. His threat deflated, the former movie star decided to "pull back" on the ballot measure and declared himself ready to negotiate.

California's 2.1 million active and retired public employees dodged a bullet. In so doing, they won an important victory for their counterparts across the country — some 18 million who participate in traditional, guaranteed pension plans funded by taxpayers, including 1.3 million in New York State alone. But the conservative movement to turn public employee pensions into individual accounts invested in the stock market — much like the Bush plan to privatize Social Security — is a patient, well-funded project that's not going to fade away soon.

Schwarzenegger's assault on public-sector workers actually grew out of a blueprint drawn up almost 10 years ago by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a group of right-wing state lawmakers. They saw it partly as a way to break the power of public sector unions, but also to bolster conservatives' push to privatize Social Security by showing how it could be done at the state level. ALEC peddled its plan aggressively to sympathetic state officials — then-Texas Gov. George W. Bush was a supporter — and won a big victory in 2000, when a massive lobbying effort by financial services companies persuaded Florida to give its 650,000-plus public employees the option of swapping their traditional pension benefits for individual accounts.

But the project fizzled somewhat when the vast majority of Florida workers shunned the personal investment gospel, instead sticking with their guaranteed pension benefits. What gave the pension privatization movement new momentum was the post-2000 stock market downturn, which damaged the funding of many large public pension funds. Faced with the possibility that they might have to contribute money to the plans rather than rely on the

stock market to add value, some state legislatures were suddenly willing to consider an idea that would permanently lower their pension costs.

Just this month, Alaska's State Senate passed a bill that would force future public employees into individual accounts, gradually phasing out the state's traditional pension plan. The bill now goes before the State House. And in August Oregon's legislature agreed to offer future employees a drastically reduced guaranteed pension, plus new, individual accounts.

Why do conservative politicians and their allies in the corporate world hate public employee pension funds so much? Public pensions tend not to know their place in the orthodox capitalist pecking order: They've been instrumental over the past 30 years in such causes as opposing corporate investment in apartheid South Africa and promoting investment in local economies. Most recently, they've made their influence felt by challenging unaccountable boards at companies like Walt Disney and suing companies that lost millions of dollars for their shareholders, like Enron and WorldCom. Public pensions can wield such influence because they're so big — well over \$2 trillion in assets in 2003, the most recent figure on record.

Forcing retired public employees to rely on individual accounts instead of collectively managed, collectively bargained pension benefits ends their capability to act together on social causes. It deprives unions of a major piece of leverage. And, like Bush's Social Security plan, it directs trillions of dollars of investments into the hands of mutual fund providers and insurance companies. Unions know how serious the threat is, which is why they are fighting so hard against Schwarzenegger's move in California.

Before Schwarzenegger decided to back off, he was poised to attract massive financial backing from conservative advocacy groups for his pension privatization push. But, curiously, the stock market downturn may now be providing supporters of public pensions with some important leverage. Last month, the West Virginia House passed a "reverse privatization" bill that would end an individual accounts-based retirement program for state teachers, and reopen the state's traditional pension plan. The move came after teachers complained about the poor performance of their individual accounts.

*Eric Laursen, a New York-based journalist and activist, is writing a book, The People's Pension: The Politics of Social Security Since 1980.*



# Religious Fright

BY DON MONKERUD

When Americans ponder why the rest of the world regards their country with less respect, they could turn to the recent controversy created by the U.S. delegation at the March meeting in New York of the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women.

At the two-week meeting, attended by 6,000 women from 130 countries, the U.S. delegation created a furor when it refused to sign a declaration reaffirming the Beijing Platform for Action. The issue reveals both the new approach of right-wing fundamentalists to international organizations and the extent to which such groups are increasingly determining U.S. foreign policy.

Signed by the United States and 184 other countries in 1995, the Platform included resolutions asserting the fundamental rights of women and called for ending discrimination against women in 12 important areas.

Before signing a reaffirmation of the Beijing Platform, the U.S. delegation demanded that an amendment rejecting abortion be inserted. Meeting with widespread opposition from international women's organizations and supported only by Egypt and Qatar, the leader of the U.S. delegation, Ambassador Ellen R. Sauerbrey, finally relented and signed the declaration.

Sauerbrey made it clear, however, that the declaration would not legally bind the United States under international law. It also did not recognize abortion as a method of family planning, or support abortion as reproductive health assistance, or support quotas as a method of advancing women.

According to Zonibel Woods, senior advisor for international policy at the International Women's Health Coalition, instead of addressing important human rights issues and determining how to move forward at the conference, the U.S. delegation spent its time attempting to roll back commitments made 10 years ago.

Woods observed that other countries are frustrated by U.S. policy that focuses moralistically on abstinence, parental rights and restricting comprehensive health education. Bush is withholding \$34 million earmarked for the U.N. Population Fund to promote family planning, sexual and reproductive rights, sex education and condom use. He has imposed a "global gag rule," which prevents organizations that receive U.S. funds from counseling, making referrals or providing information about abortion.

The United Nations estimates that withholding these funds led to an additional two million unwanted pregnancies, and more than 75,000 infant and child deaths.

Advocates for right-wing think tanks and fundamentalist groups now populate U.S. delegations to the United Nations. Take the U.S. women's delegation, which includes Nancy Pfotenhauer, president of the Independent Women's Forum, a group that is against spending tax dollars to address violence against women, and that opposes women's comparable pay efforts and affirmative action programs; and Winsome Packer,

Fundamentalist  
Bush appointees  
infiltrate U.S. delegation  
to U.N. Commission  
on the Status  
of Women

former executive assistant to the vice president of the ultraconservative Heritage Foundation.

Such appointments clearly signaled a change of management at the State Department. Bush appointments to non-governmental organizations at the United Nations come from right-wing religious groups:

- Janet Parshall, author of *Tough Faith: Trusting God in Troubled Times and Light in the City: Why Christians Must Advance and Not Retreat*, hosts a conservative talk show and frequently attacks women's rights advocates such as Gloria Steinem and Patricia Ireland.
- A devout Presbyterian, Patricia P. Brister served as chair of the Republican Party of Louisiana and chair of Bush/Cheney '04 in Louisiana.
- Susan B. Hirschmann, a lobbyist, is a former chief of staff for Tom DeLay and former executive director of Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, a conservative political action group that helped defeat the Equal Rights Amendment.

Such appointments illustrate a religious focus on foreign policy that is a break with the traditional separation of church and state, a policy that began to change with Pat Robertson and the creation of the Moral Majority. Backed by social conservatives, neo-conservative ideologues and the religious right, President Ronald Reagan declared that foreign policy would henceforth rest on "moral clarity" combined with military might.

"From the earliest days in America, fundamentalists stuck with separation of church and state and saw no role for fundamentalist Christians in politics," said Wilfred M. McClay, professor of history and humanities at the University of Tennessee. "But in the 1970s, the Moral Majority broke this pattern."

Today, approximately 12 foundations fund a network of interconnected groups that coordinate activities and push similar agendas. Several of these right-wing religious groups stand out for their growing power in foreign policy. They include:

- The Center for Security Policy, whose website condemns the U.N. General Assembly for "utopian socialism" and as a haven of anti-Americanism whose members "can only be regarded as enemies."
- The Institute on Religion and Democracy

(IRD) which claims, "to reform the social and political witness of the American churches" by countering the "secular agenda of the Left" with "the timeless message of Jesus Christ." The IRD supported the Contra death squads in Central America and right-wing militaristic Zionists, and criticizes mainstream Christians that "spout pacifist-sounding slogans."

- The Institute for Public Policy and Religion wants to steer foreign policy away from human rights toward religious freedom. The institute warns its followers against engaging in global warming issues, supports "just wars" and advocates greater Christian participation in public and foreign policy to promote "family life," anti-abortion policy and anti-gay marriage programs.
- The Ethics and Public Policy Center (EPPC), established in 1976, aims "to clarify and reinforce the bond between the Judeo-Christian moral tradition and the public debate over domestic and foreign policy issues." The EPPC was the first institute to attack "secular humanists" and promote a "cultural war" against liberalism. Ernest Lefever, founder of EPPC, authored *America's Imperial Burden*, which justifies American empire building.

The efforts of these groups have paid off in converting the role of the Christian right from one of criticizing the United Nations as a secular institution to infiltrating and attempting to reshape the U.N. agenda. According to Mark Silk, director of the Leonard E. Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life at Trinity College, since September 11 foreign policy has taken on "significant religious dimensions" with "a rhetorical style of America bringing God's gift of freedom to the planet."

Myriad groups such as the Independent Women's Forum, Empower America, the Family Research Council, Concerned Women for America and the International Right-to-Life Foundation also play a role in promoting a religious right-wing agenda.

By breaking down the separation of church and state, these groups are bringing religion squarely into the center of government and refocusing governmental policy on their narrowly defined ethical and religious views.



ILLUSTRATION:  
WILLIAM LINDLEY

## IN BRIEF

### A CONSERVATIVE COUP AT THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

The Corporation For Public Broadcasting (CPB) has forced out President Kathleen Cox. Ken Ferree, Michael Powell's former top aide at the Federal Communications Commission, is serving as her interim replacement. Jeff Chester of the Center for Digital Democracy said, "[Ferree is] the perfect apparatchik to run [the CPB's] zealous campaign to promote conservative/GOP-approved public broadcasting programming." The right-wing swing of CPB has been in the works for years. Just look at the new PBS programming ("Tucker Carlson: Unfiltered" and the "Wall Street Journal's Journal Editorial Report") or the current make-up of the CPB board. The *Current* reported last year that two new CPB board members, Gay Hart Gaines, Cheryl Halpern and their families have given more than \$816,000 to Republican causes over the past 14 years. Gaines also once chaired Newt Gingrich's political action committee, GOPAC. "Those who care about the future of PBS, NPR and noncommercial programming will need to watch Ferree, [CPB Chair Kenneth] Tomlinson, and Co. closely," said Chester. "Under a spotlight, they are likely to reveal themselves as working to undermine the mandate of public broadcasting established almost 40 years ago."

### POT SMOKERS BEWARE!

If Congressman James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) gets his way, pot smokers could face up to five years in federal prison for passing a joint to someone who's been in drug treatment. Sensenbrenner is pushing one of the most draconian pieces of drug legislation seen in years. According to Families Against Mandatory Minimums, the law makes virtually every drug crime committed in urban areas subject to "drug free zone" penalties that carry a five-year mandatory minimum sentence.



**TOM DELAY'S  
CULTURE OF LIFE**

"When a man is in trouble or in a good fight, you want to have your friends around, preferably armed. So I feel really good."  
— House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-TX) speaking on April 16 at the National Rifle Association convention in Houston.

### CUBAN CONNECTED TO AIRLINE BOMBING SEEKS ASYLUM IN U.S.

Luis Posada Carriles, one of the most notorious militant Cuban exiles has applied for political asylum in the United States. The 77-year-old former CIA operative illegally entered the United States in March after years of hiding in Central America and the Caribbean. Posada has been connected to the 1976 downing of a civilian airliner that killed 73 passengers; a series of 1997 bombings of hotels, restaurants, and discotheques in Havana that killed an Italian tourist; and a plot to assassinate Castro five years ago.



## Osama bin Sublettin

In July 2002, Granite International Management posted a notice in 156 East Second St., offering a \$1,000 reward to tenants who turned in “terrorists”—or illegal sublettors.

“In order for the Landlord to remain vigilant with regards to any potential terrorist activity,” the flyer read, “the Landlord must have accurate records of the actual building occupants. To this end, Granite will take a zero tolerance approach to illegal occupants. Furthermore, in order to encourage vigilance amongst building tenants, the Landlord is willing to provide tenants in this building with a REWARD OF \$1,000 for any information leading to the eviction of an illegal occupant.”

Of course, the odds that some fiendish fundamentalist Muslim minions might be using an illegal sublet as a base to scope out the Citicorp Center are microscopic next to the chances that some previous tenant’s roommate or ex-boyfriend might be trying to hang on to a cheap apartment.

Granite is not the only landlord to use “security” as a lever since 9/11. At the Peter Cooper Village complex on the East Side, tenants are fighting off their landlord’s attempt to require photo-ID cardkeys to get into the buildings. Tenants say the landlord, Met Life, which recently began deregulating vacant apartments, wants to track their comings and goings so it can snare illegal sublettors. —SW

# East Side Eviction Scam

## LANDLORD TRIES TO CLAIM 15-UNIT BUILDING FOR A FAMILY OF THREE

As New York City rents skyrocket, landlords are trying all kinds of schemes to get rid of rent-stabilized tenants. People in one Lower East Side building are fighting back against one of the most audacious.



**LAURA ZAMBRANO** has been living at 47-49 East 3rd Street for 12 years. She and her fellow tenants have been fighting eviction for a year and half.

## Housing Misery Index

Almost two-thirds of the city’s 300,000 working-age poor families are paying more than half their income for rent, according to “Housing Hardship and Rent Burdens Among Poor New Yorkers,” a study released by the Community Service Society April 12. Forty-three percent of survey respondents reported that they had fallen behind in their rent, had their phone or electricity turned off, had to move in with others, or wound up homeless during 2004.

Even extending the income cutoff to 25 percent above the federal poverty guidelines, the study found that 56 percent of poor and “near-poor” households, about 232,000 families, were spending more than half their income on rent. The current poverty guidelines are \$9,570 a year for a single person and \$16,090 for a family of three.

The problem was especially acute outside of subsidized housing. In rent-stabilized apartments, the study found, half of poor families were spending more than 62 percent of their income on rent—even at a median rent of around \$600 a month. That left them with less than \$30 a week per person for all other expenses.

“If these figures are striking, they are no doubt worse at present,” the report concluded, noting that rents have gone up significantly since 2001, when the rent data it used was collected. —SW

## Rent Guidelines Board Vote

The city Rent Guidelines Board, which every year sets permissible increases for the city’s 950,000 rent-stabilized apartments, will vote on its preliminary guidelines for 2005-06 on Tuesday, May 3, at 5:30 p.m. at Cooper Union, 7 East Third St. The board will set the final guidelines on June 21.

Tenant groups plan protests. Last year, the board allowed increases of 3.5 percent for a one-year lease renewal and 6.5 percent for a two-year lease.

BY STEVEN WISHNIA  
PHOTOS BY ANTRIM CASKEY

“Your tenancy is hereby terminated as of said date,” read the papers tenants at 47 East Third St. began to receive in August 2003, shortly before their leases expired. “Furthermore, the Landlord will not renew your lease based upon the fact that Alistair Economakis seeks possession... for use as Alistair Economakis’ primary residence in New York City.”

Economakis and his wife, Catherine, have been trying to take advantage of the law that lets landlords take over a rent-regulated apartment for their own personal occupancy. Tenants in the Lower East Side building say the Economakis family is trying to turn a legal loophole into the Holland Tunnel: The couple wants to empty the entire five-story, 15-apartment building to create a home for themselves, their baby, and a live-in nanny.

That would mean evicting 24 people, including two families with small children, from 11 apartments in the building. The endangered tenants, most of whom have lived there for more than 20 years, say the Economakis family is just pulling a scam to drive them out so they can either sell the building or charge market rate for the apartments. The current tenants pay from \$600 to \$1,200 a month rent.

“It’s a real abuse of what’s intended by the law,” says the tenants’ lawyer, Stephen Dobkin. The tenants have asked the State Supreme Court to declare the landlord’s plan illegal, and several are fighting their individual eviction proceedings in Housing Court.

Tenants say Catherine Economakis, who acquired an interest in the building along with her father, Peter Yatrakis, in 2001, began trying to oust them immediately. Ursula Kinzel, who’s lived there 20 years, says they hired a private investigator who posed as a UPS deliv-

eryman to see if she was still living with her old roommate. Two longtime tenants were evicted in 2002.

“They’re very bold, aggressive, and predatory about what they do,” says David Pultz, who’s lived there since 1978, as he sits at a table in Kinzel’s sunlit fifth-floor apartment. “They have this sense that we are in their way,” chimes in 12-year resident Laura Zambrano, “that by being rent-stabilized tenants and wanting to live here, we’re the ones doing something wrong.”

### A SPECIAL HOME OF THEIR OWN

Economakis swears that the couple genuinely plans to live there. “We’ve represented to the tenants that we’ll take out guarantees, bonds, whatever,” he says. The Economakis family now share a building with Catherine’s parents, occupying the top floor of their five-story brownstone in Cobble Hill. Their plan for the Third Street building includes five bedrooms, six bathrooms, and a gym.

If the Economakis family evicted the Third Street tenants and then didn’t move in, there probably wouldn’t be much of a penalty for it, according to Dobkin. The rent-control law, he explains, says that landlords who fraudulently claim personal use are liable for treble damages, three times the difference between the evicted tenants’ old rent and what they now have to pay, but the rent-stabilization law is much vaguer. The only penalty it specifies is that the landlord can’t increase rents on any rent-stabilized apartments left in the building — which in this case would be none.

The tenants have already spent around \$75,000 in legal fees. “You’re watching everything you’ve saved since high school drain out of your account,” says Zambrano. “We’re not going to be able to continue forever. They’re counting on that.” “If they empty the building and sell it for four or five million dollars, then \$300,000 in legal fees is peanuts,” adds Kinzel.

Economakis insists repeatedly that he wants to meet with the tenants, but they’ve refused. “The only time we hear of any of their concerns is through the media,” he says. “I don’t know what they want.”

“We want to live here. That’s the bottom line,” says David Pultz.

Tenants would meet with the Economakis family, says 12-year resident Barry Paddock, but “we’re not going to negotiate how we’re going to be evicted.”

“We’re part of the community,” says Laura Zambrano. “We have people who have kids in school here, who are in arts organizations. And where else would we go?”

“We want to stay in our homes,” says Ursula Kinzel.

“That’s the one thing that I’m not willing to compromise on,” says Economakis. “It’s just not a possibility.”

Economakis says this is the only building that he and his wife own. That is technically true; Catherine Economakis and Peter Yatrakis acquired it in a complex bankruptcy transaction beginning in 2001, through a series of limited-liability corporations connected to Granite International Management, a Brooklyn-based company headed by Yatrakis. The limited-liability corporation that held the building’s title gave it to Catherine and Alistair Economakis on Aug. 20, 2003, eight days before the couple started telling tenants that their leases would not be renewed. “They engineered our building in a way that they are the sole owners, because that’s the only way they could do owner occupancy,” says Kinzel.

### WAR OF ATTRITION

Both Economakis family members are key players in Granite, which manages at least two dozen buildings owned or co-owned by the Yatrakis/Economakis family in the Lower East Side, Chelsea, Harlem, and downtown Brooklyn. “It’s been a practice of theirs to push out the long-term tenants as the neighborhood’s gotten kind of trendy,” says Chandra Henderson, who lives in a Granite building at 363 West 17th St.

“They’ve been returning portions of my rent and then send out statements that don’t list the payments, overstating how much is due,” says Luellen Shetty, a photographer who lives in a Granite building on East 10th Street. She says they also send out statements that include rent not yet due for upcoming months, and then claim that all of it is outstanding, so “I have to go to court as a result and get repeated orders to show cause.”

“Too much bad behavior to go on about,” she adds. The building’s boiler was “abysmal” for more than eight years; in the winter of 2003-04, tenants only got “real heat” for a total of about two weeks. Even after the boiler was replaced in September 2004, “they had to be forced to put heat on when it was cold.”

“My living room ceiling caves in every year due to a leak upstairs and the bathroom has caved in twice,” says Christine Cafiero, another tenant in the West 17th Street building. “Now they want to raise my rent \$155 a month because they say the plumbing was redone. My ceiling just caved again last week. Plus they say the increase is due to the boiler being replaced, but my cold water hardly ever works. Super hot water all the time. I shower at the gym.”

Henderson, a model and acting teacher, says that when her lease expired last fall, Granite tacked a \$500 increase onto her rent, which had been slightly over \$900. They told her that they had been giving her a “preferential rent,” and they were now rescinding that discount.

Henderson, who moved into the building in 1994, says her lease has never said anything about a preferential rent, that her original lease said “market rate.” Granite took over in 1995, she recalls, and “Peter Yatrakis tried to insinuate that I wasn’t a real tenant. I had to take them to court to get a renewal lease.

“I’ve heard I have a pretty good case, but it’s going to be a huge expensive hassle,” she continues. “It’s kind of like a war of attrition.”

### CALLING THE LANDLORD’S BLUFF

The Third Street tenants, who have formed an association with tenants in other Granite buildings, say the phony preferential-rent claim is a common Granite technique to raise rents. “We’ve been hearing from a lot of tenants in that situation,” says Barry Paddock. “They moved in forever ago, and they can’t find their original lease.”

“We want to educate people not to be intimidated,” says Janet Dunson, who’s lived at 47 East Third for 15 years. “One of the best things tenants can do is call them on their bluff.”

Alistair Economakis says he is “not authorized” to discuss any other Granite buildings.

The practice of landlords claiming that they want whole buildings as their primary residence is also “becoming more common,” says Stephen Dobkin. The Economakis family, Peter A. Rose — in partnership with notorious slumlord Robert Ohelshalom — is trying to empty a four-story building at 75 Jane St. Harriet and Steven Croman, who are also represented by Rose, want to evict tenants from a six-story building at 12



**GEORGE BOYD** has been living in the building for 27 years. “It’s typical of what’s happening in New York City,” he says. “What landlords do is get rid of people who have affordable housing so they can raise the rents.”

East 72nd St. to create an 8,000-square-foot space for themselves and their two children.

Alistair Economakis insists that he really is going to live at 47 East Third St. “I’m not able to move into a house that I own,” he complains. Does he have a problem with evicting people to do that? “Right before we started we reached out and tried to contact the tenants and discuss our plan,” he answers.

Does Economakis have any remorse about kicking out everyone in a 15-apartment building? Well, it’s really only 11 apartments, he says. (Two are vacant and two are occupied by Economakis relatives, according to tenants.) And actually, it’s only ten, because one tenant is over 62, so they’re legally required to give him a comparable apartment. “We’re perfectly willing to do that,” he says.

“We’ve always tried to resolve this in an amicable manner,” he continues. “We’re not taking the position that ‘that’s what we’re going to do and that’s it.’ We realize that this is a difficult situation and we’d like to assist them.”

Peter Yatrakis was a little blunter in a letter he sent to City Councilmember Margarita Lopez in April 2004 after she criticized the eviction plan. The building’s tenants, he wrote, opted not to choose “hard work, sacrifice, loans, and dreams deferred.” Instead, he said, they chose “to take advantage of very, very low rents.”

**ROBERT APPLETON**, a painter, has been living in the building since 1978. “These people are ruthless. They are associated with at least 25 other buildings, and they have evicted about a third of the tenants. We are not going to let that happen here.”



THE PEOPLE’S LAWYER

# The Top 10 Mistakes Tenants Make in Housing Court



By ANN SCHNEIDER

Brooklyn Legal Services identifies the following as the most frequent mistakes made by tenants who do not have lawyers:

- 1) Ignoring court papers;
- 2) Showing up to court late;
- 3) Signing a stipulation without fully understanding it;
- 4) Missing court dates;
- 5) Going to the wrong room;
- 6) Waiting until you receive a 72-hour notice to act;
- 7) Paying cash without getting a receipt;
- 8) Leaving important papers at home;
- 9) “Withholding” rent and then spending it; and
- 10) Agreeing to pay money on a schedule and then withholding it because repairs weren’t done.

In New York City, a landlord must seek court approval before evicting anyone. But sometimes tenants do not receive the proper notices telling them to come to court. If the first notice you receive is a 72-hour notice, or a Notice of Eviction, it means the court has already entered a judgment against you. Either a 72-hour notice or a Notice of Eviction is a valid way for a tenant to be evicted. A 72-hour notice must be served personally upon you. A Notice of Eviction may be mailed, and it provides up to six days for you to leave the apartment or seek an Order to Show Cause — your challenge to the landlord’s charges — before the marshal actually puts your things in storage and changes the locks.

Always bring all of your rent receipts to court. If you agreed to pay rent in a court stipulation, you must pay even if the landlord did not uphold his or her obligations. The only alternative is returning to court to attempt to force the landlord to fulfill his or her obligations before you pay up. Unless the judge grants you an Order to Show Cause, the landlord may still evict you if you default on the stipulated payment schedule.

Generally, only rent stabilization or rent control limit how much a landlord can raise your rent. The number of apartments still subject to rent control or stabilization is gradually declining, partly because of the state’s weakening of rent regulations in the ’90s, partly because of the state’s feeble enforcement of laws against illegal overcharges. People moving to new apartments must contend with market-rate rents because few people leave affordable apartments — and when they do, landlords do whatever they can to jack up the rents.

Housing Court is not a place to look for compassion. Like all of us, Housing Court judges have bosses, in the form of appeals-court judges. Landlord lawyers make it a practice to appeal any decision too sympathetic to the tenant if it’s not solidly grounded in the law.

United, tenants can begin to match the real-estate pressures on our elected representatives. Join Metropolitan Council on Housing for only \$25 per year, or visit them at [www.metcouncil.net](http://www.metcouncil.net).

You can learn more about your rights at [lawhelp.org](http://lawhelp.org), a Web site designed to help low-income New Yorkers arm themselves with legal knowledge.

*The People’s Lawyer is a project of the National Lawyers Guild, New York City chapter. Contact us at (212) 679-6018 or at [www.nlgny.org](http://www.nlgny.org).*



ILLUSTRATION: LEAH DANGER



# world IN BRIEF

## POPE BENEDICT XVI: THE BRIDGE TO THE 12TH CENTURY

One of the Catholic church's most reactionary leaders has been elected to become the church's 265th pope. Nicknamed the "Grand Inquisitor" and "God's Rottweiler," Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger had served as Pope John Paul II's right-hand man for over 20 years, cracking down on progressive priests across the globe. Ratzinger strongly opposes abortion, women priests, birth control and homosexuality (which he describes as an "intrinsic moral evil"). Politically he helped decimate liberation theology, the doctrine used by Latin American priests – including El Salvador's Oscar Romero and Haiti's Jean Bertrand Aristide – to uplift and empower the poor.

Ratzinger grew up in Germany where he briefly served in the Hitler Youth and the German Army during World War Two. Despite being the first German pope in 1,000 years, a recent poll by the *Der Spiegel* newspaper found just 29 percent of Germans viewed him favorably.

Here in the United States, Ratzinger may have helped President Bush win last year's election. In August he sent a letter to Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick of Washington, D.C. that advised Catholic voters not to vote for any candidate that supports abortion rights. The letter also advised priests to deny Communion to supporters of abortion rights. Soon the news media began questioning whether Sen. John Kerry, a Catholic, should receive Communion or receive the votes of Catholics. President Bush ended up winning the Catholic vote in many key states, including Ohio.

## 500 CITIZEN NUCLEAR WEAPONS 'INSPECTORS' ARRESTED IN BELGIUM

In Belgium, police arrested some 500 activists on April 18 during a citizens nuclear weapons "inspection" at a NATO airbase. The Greenpeace-organized protest called on NATO to become a nuclear-free alliance and for the U.S. to pull its nuclear weapons from all NATO countries. Greenpeace estimates 480 nuclear weapons are now housed in six European nations: Italy, Germany, Belgium, Britain, Turkey and the Netherlands.

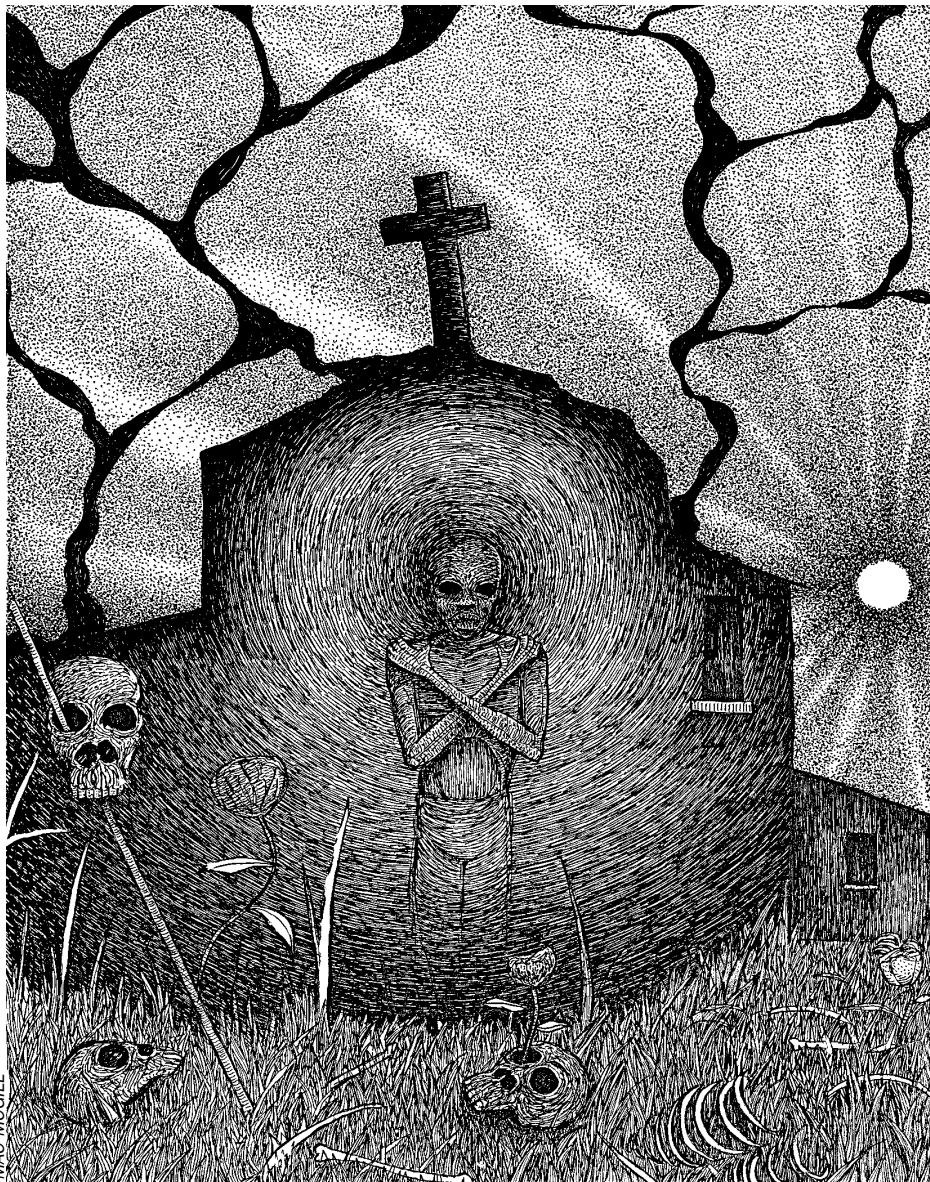
## 300,000 IRAQIS PROTEST 2ND ANNIVERSARY OF OCCUPATION

On April 9, upwards of 300,000 Iraqis marked the second anniversary of the U.S. occupation by marching on Firdos Square, where U.S. forces toppled Saddam Hussein's statue. This time, demonstrators mocked the United States by pulling down a statute of President Bush and then burning his effigy. As the throng of protesters curved through Baghdad, American soldiers stood behind blast walls and barbed wire, while snipers manned rooftops. Similar marches demanding that the U.S. military leave occurred in other Iraqi cities, including Ramadi where over 5,000 demonstrated.

## U.S. SHIELDS DOPE SMUGGLING SOLDIERS

The U.S. ambassador to Colombia, William Wood, said five G.I.s arrested for alleged cocaine smuggling are immune from prosecution in that country. The five soldiers were arrested March 29 at a military base in Texas after debarking from a military plane from Columbia. More than 200 Colombian citizens have been extradited to the United States to face trial under a bilateral treaty between the two nations. The Colombian government is not expected to press for extradition for fear of losing American aid. The five soldiers are suspected of smuggling 35 pounds of cocaine.

# Reconciling Rwanda



BY NEELA GHOSHAL

KIGALI, Rwanda—The smell of death still lingers in the air at the Murambi Memorial Site in southern Rwanda.

Beginning on April 21, 1994, more than 50,000 Tutsis were massacred by Hutus at the former technical school. Their bodies, thrown into mass graves, were exhumed in 1995. Now, many of the skeletons are preserved, laid out on tables in classroom after classroom. A testament to the horror of the genocide, in which the Hutu government, private militias, and civilians killed an estimated one million Tutsis and Hutus opposed to the ethnic cleansing in 100 days, the display is one element of a policy designed by the current government to ensure that genocide never happens again.

In his speech on April 7 of this year, commemorating the 11th anniversary of the genocide, President Paul Kagame urged, "It is only through telling the truth that we will bring about justice and reconciliation." He also promoted the work of Rwanda's gacaca courts, traditional neighborhood tribunals, which, along with the U.N. International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda, are responsible for meting out justice to more than 100,000 charged with participation in the killings.

Some observers question Kagame's commitment to having the whole truth told. He has refused to allow the courts to prosecute members of the predominantly Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which he previously commanded, and whose invasion of Rwanda in 1990 precipitated the 1994 genocide. The RPF has also been charged with human rights abuses and war crimes by international observers.

However, the government has quashed discussion of possible ethnic bias in the courts by banning use of the terms "Hutu" and "Tutsi." Asked whether both groups are equally represented in the current government, David Rugero, an administrator at the Rwanda Bureau of Information and Broadcasting replied, "Those words don't exist anymore. If you use them, you can even be arrested.... We are simply Rwandans."

## ONE PEOPLE

Recognizing that "Hutu" and "Tutsi" were largely constructed categories – deriving largely from social class before being constructed as two distinct races by Belgian colonizers – the post-genocide governments have consistently reinforced the message that Rwanda is inhabited by one people: Rwandans. This philosophy is part of a broader government strategy to eliminate what Kagame refers to as "genocide ideology."

"We have seen the evils that ethnicity can cause," says Osvald Rutimburana, Project Coordinator at the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission. "We are trying to build a nation – a nation where equality will have an opportunity. We are encouraging citizenship and nationalism, not ethnicity."

However, eliminating references to ethnicity in public discourse may have the effect of stifling progress toward real equality. Official silence regarding ethnic identity could allow past inequalities to be replicated.

"The government does not want to hear suggestions that one ethnicity or the other has too much power. Those are divisive thoughts. It is not possible to know, or even discuss, whether the majority Hutu population is well represented in universities. No

such records are kept," wrote Marc Lacey in a 2003 *New York Times* article.

Some argue that the Tutsi minority is clearly benefiting from the silence. "Not only are the structures of power in Rwanda being Tutsified, civil organization – from the media to nongovernmental organizations – are being cleansed of any but a nominal Hutu presence," wrote Mahmood Mamdani, a Ugandan professor, in 2001.

## MISTRUST REMAINS

Eliminating "divisive thoughts" is easier said than done. "One consequence of the genocide is a mistrust among people," says Albert Nzamukwerekwa, Executive Secretary of Never Again International's Rwanda Chapter. "There is the question of Hutu and Tutsi. The government does not allow people to talk about it, but it's in our minds."

Nzamukwerekwa, a recent graduate of the National University of Rwanda, promotes open dialogue among youth as part of the path toward reconciliation. He is one of the organizers of an upcoming Global Youth Prevention of Genocide Forum, to be held in Kigali in late May. "Sometimes talking with people from other countries helps Rwandan youth break the silence," says Nzamukwerekwa.

Additional obstacles to lasting peace in Rwanda remain. The World Bank places Rwanda's poverty rate at 60 percent, higher than in 1994. "While the genocide cannot be attributed to poverty, poverty played a part in it," says Nzamukwerekwa, noting that during the genocide, Hutu peasants were exhorted to kill Tutsis in order to take their land. He adds, "There are 5,000 street kids in Kigali. Those people are ready to be manipulated; they don't have anything to eat. So if someone says, come and join my militia? They'll go."

## UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT

Kagame's government has employed thousands in various public works projects in its efforts toward poverty reduction. But a drive through Kigali demonstrates that most development is taking place on the wealthier outskirts of the city.

In addition, urban improvement schemes may displace the city's most vulnerable – those who have historically been largely Hutu. Driving along one of Kigali's new winding, elevated suburban roads, Rugero points out a shantytown in the valley below. "The government is going to bulldoze all those shacks, and compensate the people. We don't want shacks like that in the center of the city."

While compensating the displaced is a step up from standard practice in cities like Nairobi, where urban slums are routinely bulldozed with no prior warning and no compensation, it also runs the risk of causing some Rwandans to question Kagame's "one Rwanda" policy, particularly if traditionally wealthier Tutsis are seen to benefit.

"Every Rwandan has made a contribution to reconciliation in this country," says Osvald Rutimburana. Rwanda has come a long way since 1994. But it will take many more such contributions, along with a genuine commitment to truth-telling and open dialogue, to convert the slogan of Nzamukwerekwa's organization – "Never Again" – into a reality.



# Mexico's New Uprising

BY JENNIFER WHITNEY

MEXICO CITY—Mexico's political and economic elites hoped to preserve business as usual when Congress voted April 7 to disqualify Andrés Manuel López Obrador from next year's presidential election. Instead, they may inadvertently have launched a nonviolent civil disobedience campaign, headed by the popular leftwing mayor of Mexico City himself.

López Obrador (or AMLO as he is known to many of his supporters) has called for a silent march through the capitol on April 24; more than a million are expected to participate. So far people are complying with his request that they act peacefully. He has also challenged Mexican president Vicente Fox to a debate, to "tell me to my face why he wants me out of the 2006 election."

Seeds of democracy in Mexico sprouted in 2000 when Fox and his National Action Party (PAN) won the presidency. In doing so, he broke the 71-year reign of the wildly corrupt Institutional Revolutionary Party (the PRI, in Spanish). In many ways, President Fox was an aberration. A former CEO of Coca-Cola, his friendship and frequent photo-ops with George W. Bush wearing matching cowboy boots have left many Mexicans wondering where his allegiance lies. His frequent disagreements with his party and his battles with the still-powerful PRI have left him isolated. But Fox has built a successful political alliance to oust López Obrador around the flimsiest of pretexts.

Four years ago, Mexico City claimed a 2,200-square-foot parcel of land in order to build an access road to a hospital. The owners of the land protested, and a court ruled in their favor. The authorities involved were accused of ignoring the judge's order for a few weeks. The Fox-appointed Attorney General then called for López Obrador to be held responsible for the crime and charged with contempt of court.

Mexican politicians have protection from prosecution, called a *fuero*, for the length of their term. In order to charge them with a crime, Congress must vote for a *desafuero*, that is, the removal of immunity. This is what was approved in the April 7 vote. Under Mexican law, a person cannot run for office while facing criminal charges. Had the prosecution sought to resolve the matter four years ago, it would now be history. To date, no substantive proof has been produced that López Obrador was directly involved in disobeying the court order. The controversial road was never even built.

## A POPULAR MAYOR

The spectacle of the PAN and the PRI crusading against López Obrador's alleged corruption is widely seen as a farce. As Narconews.com reported a few months ago, Fox has thus far refused to collect taxes on the sale of Banamex, the national bank, to Citigroup in 2001. Yet he has charged López Obrador with "pop-

ulism," which is construed in Mexico as a kind of corrupt paternalism. In response, López Obrador remarked that, "Populism is not the programs that the [Mexico City] government promotes but, rather, actions such as not collecting 30 billion pesos (US \$3billion) from [Fox's] friend Roberto Hernández for the debt imposed by the sale of Banamex."

If López Obrador does run, he will almost surely win. A poll taken just before the *desafuero* showed that, if elections were held, nearly 50 percent would vote for him, leaving the two other main candidates around 15 percent each.

His popularity cuts across a broad spectrum of society. He has earned the vote of the capitol's elderly by granting them a monthly social security stipend — something nonexistent in the rest of the country. The new light rail being built has created hundreds of jobs and promises to unsnarl traffic on the notoriously jammed Insurgentes Avenue. His daily, nationally televised press conferences demonstrate an accessibility and openness unseen in most politicians. An outspoken critic of the North American Free Trade Agreement, he is also opposed to further privatization of national resources.

## ANOTHER CHAVEZ?

In considering a possible López Obrador presidency, Washington's skittish policy-makers wonder whether he will be a sweeping reformer like Venezuela's Hugo Chavez or a more cautious liberal like Brazil's Luis Ignacio "Lula" da Silva. López Obrador's rise comes at a time when the Latin American left continues to make gains. Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela and Uruguay boast presidents who are more committed to regional progress than to the U.S. (or International Monetary Fund) agenda. The center-to-right presidents of Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia are besieged by protests; the Peruvian president's approval ratings have plummeted into single digits. If López Obrador were elected, it would suggest that the U.S. may not be able to keep Mexico in its historic role of client state, sending a strong message to the rest of the continent.

Though his reforms are well-received, no



**STILL RUNNING:** Mexico City's popular left-wing mayor Andrés Manuel López Obrador greets supporters days after Congress voted to disqualify him from next year's presidential elections. PHOTO: CARLOS RAMOS MARNAHUA

one considers him a revolutionary. A seemingly unlikely supporter is the wealthiest man in Latin America, Carlos Slim, who is behind much of the gentrification of the city center. López Obrador also raised eyebrows by contracting Giuliani Partners to assist Mexico City's police force.

## MEXICO'S NEWEST IMPORTS: GANDHI & KING

National outrage against the *desafuero* is growing. *The Economist* cites a Mitofsky poll taken in mid-March shows that 80 percent of the population oppose it, up from 58 percent last September. The papers are filled with announcements of concerts, marches and meetings in protest of the proceedings; the streets of Mexico City are plastered with banners, graffiti and posters. There have been solidarity demonstrations in France, Australia, England, Spain, Brazil, and the US. On April 16, several state and federal legislators staged a 24-hour hunger strike at Fox's family ranch in Guanajuato.

"If they take away AMLO's immunity, we'll do civil disobedience," said María, a member of the recently formed Youth With AMLO, at one protest. When asked what she meant by "civil disobedience," she was vague. "We'll follow in the tradition of Gandhi and Martin Luther King." Other people echoed her, almost verbatim. "We'll refuse to pay taxes," one man said laughing, "Many of us don't pay them anyway." Most were quick to say that they wouldn't engage in tactics such as road blockades and sit-ins that might lead to repression.

According to Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar, a Mexican intellectual and ex-guerrilla, there are no examples of nonviolent resistance in Mexican history. "When Mexicans really want to change things, they run to the hills and start a guerrilla organization. There is no history of civil disobedience here. Or rather, there is, but it usually ends with something like [the massacre in] Tlatelolco in 1968."

While mainstream journalists are atwitter

about the violence of sit-ins and the violation of human rights posed by road blockades, López Obrador seems to be setting the stage for nonviolence. He argues that it is not peaceful resistance that puts democracy at risk: "The people always act in responsible ways; the irresponsible ones are the men of the PRI and the PAN who decide to crush the will of the people, and though they've been provoked, the Mexican people will continue to struggle responsibly."

Opposition to the *desafuero* is also coming from conservative opponents of the Mexico City mayor as well as Zapatista spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos, who said he would oppose a *desafuero* against any candidate, simply for being unjust. PRI Congressman Roberto Campo Cifrián said, "I'm not in favor of López Obrador; I have no reason to defend him or argue in his favor, but I'm convinced that for democracy to continue, all options must be valid... To try to eliminate an option, or to win the election but lose the popular vote will destroy the only possibility we have to build democracy."

As Marcos notes, "the *desafuero*... would put our country back in time by nearly a century... to the year 1910. It would mean the overriding of the electoral process in order to take power." It was in 1910 that the dictator Porfirio Díaz made a *desafuero* against reformist presidential candidate Francisco Madero, who was imprisoned on a minor technicality and released shortly after the elections. Four months later the dictator was toppled when the Mexican Revolution was launched under General Emiliano Zapata. Fox doesn't seem to remember Mexican history as well as the people now chanting in the streets: "Where there's a *desafuero*, there will be a revolution."

Jennifer Whitney is co-author of *We Are Everywhere: the Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-Capitalism* (Verso 2003).

## TO THE LEFT...

Left-leaning political parties and movements are riding a wave of popularity in Latin America as the region increasingly rejects the free-market economic policies that have been imposed on it over the past 20 years. —J. Tarleton

## Argentina

President Nestor Kirchner, has refused to follow the IMF's free-market dictates in return for loans and has instead told the Fund and other major lenders they will be repaid only when Argentina's economy is stronger.

## Bolivia

A pro-U.S. president was run out of the country in the fall of 2003 after more than 80 demonstrators were killed during anti-government protests. Leftist Evo Morales is the front-runner in Bolivia's 2007 presidential race.

## Brazil

In 2002, former steelworker and union leader Luis Ignacio "Lula" da Silva became the first leftist elected to Brazil's presidency. Lula has adhered to IMF orthodoxy, however, causing social movements in Brazil to falter.

## Uruguay

Leftist Tabare Vazquez was elected president last year, breaking the 170-year stranglehold Uruguay's two traditional parties had over the nation's political life.

## Venezuela

President Hugo Chavez has used record oil revenues to finance anti-poverty programs for the nation's poor majority. Chavez won a recall referendum last August with 59 percent of the vote.



# Playing With Skulls in Iraq

BY PAUL ROCKWELL

**A**iden Delgado, an Army Reservist in the 320th Military Police Company, served in Iraq from April 1, 2003, through April 1, 2004. After spending six months in Nasiriyah in southern Iraq, he spent six months stationed at the now-infamous Abu Ghraib prison outside of Baghdad.

I first met Delgado in a classroom at Acalanes High School in Lafayette, California, where he presented a slide show on the atrocities that he observed in Iraq.

In one government class for seniors, Delgado presented graphic images: his own photos of a soldier playing with a skull, the charred remains of children and kids riddled with bullets. Some students were squeamish, like myself, and turned their heads. Others rubbed tears from their eyes. But at the end, many expressed appreciation for airing a taboo subject. "If you are old enough to go to war," Delgado said, "you are old enough to know what really goes on."

On September 11, 2001, completely unaware of the day's fateful events, Delgado enlisted in the Army, expecting to serve two days a month in the Reserves. When he turned on the television, He realized instantly that his whole world had changed. This is his story.

**ROCKWELL:** *When did you begin to turn against the military and the war?*

**DELGADO:** From the very earliest time I was in Iraq, I began to see ugly strains of racism among our troops — anti-Arab, anti-Muslim sentiments.

*What are some examples?*

There was a master sergeant. He whipped this group of Iraqi children with a steel Humvee antenna. He just lashed them with it because they were crowding around, bothering him, and he was tired of talking. It was a matter of routine for guys in my unit to drive by in a Humvee and shatter bottles over Iraqis' heads as they went by.

*Your unit, the 320th Military Police, was stationed at Abu Ghraib for six months. Who were the prisoners at Abu Ghraib? Where did they come from?*

There were 4,000 to 6,000 prisoners at Abu Ghraib. I got to work with a lot of officers, so I got to see the paperwork. I found out that a lot of prisoners were imprisoned for no crime at all. They were not insurgents. Some were inside for petty theft or drunkenness. But the majority — over 60 percent — were not imprisoned for crimes committed against the coalition.

*How did so many noncombatants get imprisoned?*

Every time our base came under attack, we sent out teams to sweep up all men between the ages of 17 and 50. There were random sweeps. The paperwork to get them out of prison took six months or a year.

*Were any detainees killed?*

More than 50 prisoners were killed.

*What happened?*

The enemy around Baghdad randomly shelled our base. More than 50 detainees were killed because they were housed outside in tents, directly in the line of fire, with no protection, nowhere to run.

*Were there any other incidents?*

The prisoners were protesting nightly because of their living conditions. One demonstration became intense and got unruly. The prisoners picked up stones, pieces of wood, and threw them at the guards. One of my buddies got hit in the face. He got a bloody nose. But he wasn't hurt. The guards asked permission to use lethal force. They got it. They opened fire on the prisoners with the machine guns. They shot 12 and killed three. I know because I talked to the guy who did the killing. He showed me these grisly photographs, and he bragged about the results. "Oh," he said, "I shot this guy in the face. See, his head is split open." He talked like



ILLUSTRATION BY GINO BARZIZZO

the Terminator. "I shot this guy in the groin, he took three days to bleed to death." This was the nicest guy you would ever want to meet. He was a family man, a really courteous guy, a devout Christian. I was stunned and said to him: "You shot an unarmed man behind barbed wire for throwing a stone." He said, "Well, I knelt down. I said a prayer, stood up and gunned them all down." There was a complete disconnect between what he had done and his own morality.

*What was the commanders' response to the carnage?*

Our commander took the grisly photos and posted them up in the headquarters. It was a big, macho thing for our company to shoot more prisoners than any other unit.

*You enlisted in the Army Reserve in good faith. Now you are a conscientious objector. How did you become a C.O.?*

After advanced training, I became serious about Buddhism. I read translations of the Sutras. I became

a vegetarian. Later, when I met Iraqi prisoners firsthand, I saw the people who were supposed to be our enemies. I did not feel any hatred for them. They were young, poor guys without an education, like us. They had to fight us. And I said: "What am I doing here, fighting poor people?" I went to my commander, turned in my rifle, and said: "Look, I will stay in Iraq. I will finish my tour as a mechanic. I will do my job, but I am not going to kill anyone."

*How did your command respond to your request to become a C.O.?*

They first took away my hard, ballistic plates that go into my vest. They said: "You are not going to fight, so you won't need body armor."

*In the 1980s the U.S. military made a lot of reforms. It is widely believed that racism in the military is now a thing of the past.*

First, have we overcome racism in the sense that Blacks and whites are

banded together in the hatred of Arabs? That's not progress. Second, we had an incident in our unit with a Black specialist. There was a dispute over him dating this white girl. Two white guys took a piece of rope, tied a noose, and put [it] on his bed. He found out who it was and went to his black sergeant. They went to the equal opportunity representative. The issue was effectively stifled.

*After your long ordeal, how do you feel about your country, and what do you want from the American people?*

I still love my country. I love the idea of America. But I became disillusioned. Now I want to let the American people know what they're signing on for when they say they support the war in Iraq. And I want Americans to recognize the racial undertones of the occupation and to understand the human costs of war.

*A longer version of this interview originally appeared at blackcommentator.com.*



## MOBILIZE IN PHILADELPHIA on JUNE 18 - 21 FOR BIODEMOCRACY

The world's largest convention of biotech and pharmaceutical executives is coming to Philly this June. Join thousands to resist their closed-door corporate agenda of GE agriculture, health-care-for-profit, and bioweapons proliferations. Give voice to a different vision of local food sovereignty, fair trade, health care for all, community power, biodiversity and honest science.

### FESTIVAL Saturday, June 18

Live music, puppets, food, farmer speak-out, plant give-away

### TEACH-IN Saturday, June 18 — Monday, June 20

with Ignacio Chapela, Medea Benjamin, Anuradha Mittal, Percy Schmeiser, & many more

### DAY OF ACTION Tuesday, June 21

Expose biotech and pharmaceutical hotspots in central Philadelphia.

### FOOD NOT BOMBS 25TH ANNIVERSARY GATHERING

### GREEN AND BLACK URBAN GATHERING

### GET INVOLVED!

Contact Philadelphia RAGE

(Resistance Against Genetic Engineering)

phillyrage@riseup.net

215-222-4711

or leave a message toll-free

877-806-2871

WWW.RECLAIMTHECOMMONS.NET • WWW.BIODEV.ORG



# 30 Years After Vietnam

REFIGHTING A LOST WAR IN IRAQ

BY A.K. GUPTA

When the Vietnam War ended in April 1975, its lessons were clear to many Americans. The war had revealed the limits of power and the folly of Empire. Combined with the rot of Watergate and the Church Committee's exposure of a murderous and corrupt CIA, the war undermined the notion of benevolent American power. It inspired many people that popular resistance – among citizens and soldiers combined – had ended the war.

But those lessons were dangerous, which is why the right, as it attempts to revive the American Empire, has tried to bury the history of Vietnam under myths – from “We fought with one hand tied behind our back” to the urban legends of antiwar protesters spitting on returning vets. As one scholar puts it, “remembered as a war that was lost because of betrayal at home, Vietnam becomes a modern-day Alamo that must be avenged, a pretext for more war and generations of more veterans.”

This right-wing mythologizing provides the rationale for staying fast in the Iraqi quagmire. If Vietnam can be rebranded as a “noble crusade” – Ronald Reagan's words – lost because of “betrayal,” then we have a chance to get it right this time in Iraq and exorcise our national demons as well. Hence, Donald Rumsfeld's recent proclamation while visiting Iraq: “We don't have an exit strategy, we have a victory strategy.”

So we shouldn't cut and run from Iraq like we did in Vietnam, argues the right, but stay until we “win.” In Vietnam, there was never any chance of winning against the Vietnamese Communist Party. It was a highly popular, nationalist movement with a unified and pragmatic leadership, and aided by the Soviets and Chinese governments. South Vietnam, however, was a malformed state, nourished by U.S. bombs and dollars, that disintegrated in a few months. But that hasn't kept right-wing ideologues from arguing it was a stable state which we abandoned.

In Iraq, winning isn't about promoting democracy; that's shiny packaging for the corporate media to swoon over. Instead, winning means establishing a pliant regime and a network of U.S. military bases to project

power throughout the Middle East. Vietnam was never of strategic importance, but the Middle East is the world's “central reserve” of crude oil. So bringing Iraq to heel now (and Iran later), will give the U.S. a chokehold on the oil needed by almost all of its future rivals – Europe, Japan, China and India.

As in Vietnam, the mounting American deaths in Iraq have shaken confidence in the imperial escapade. To shore up support, and not betray our gallant soldiers like antiwar protesters did during Vietnam, we must “support our troops.” It's a meaningless slogan, but speaks to a sense of national guilt over Vietnam.

This guilt takes form in the myth of the “spat-upon vet.” It fits into the narrative that betrayal on the home front – by liberals, by antiwar activists, by Hollywood – was the real cause of defeat. This canard was demolished by Jerry Lembcke, author of *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam*. Lembcke notes that there were no press accounts during the war itself of veterans who were spat upon by antiwar protesters. (The one documented spitting incident involved Republicans assaulting wheelchair-bound antiwar vet Ron Kovic as he was

Making Americans care about genocide committed in their name is no easy task. But it may be the only way to prevent a future Vietnam or Iraq.

protesting at the 1972 Republican National Convention.)

These claims obscure the history of widespread antiwar activity by Vietnam vets, which was integral to the antiwar movement. The war was ultimately ended by massive dissent at home and within the military – sit-down strikes, ship-wide sabotage, pilots diverting missions, soldiers “fragging” superior officers. Much of the abuse toward Vietnam vets came instead from other veterans. (Once, a World War II vet told me that Vietnam vets were “crybabies” because they only had one-year tours, instead of serving for the duration of the war like himself.)



**THIS IS WHAT DEFEAT LOOKS LIKE:** So many helicopters bearing evacuees fled a collapsing South Vietnam in April 1975 that U.S. troops pushed the choppers off aircraft carriers into the ocean.

The “betrayal” myth is particularly potent. John Kerry campaigned on his “service” in the war and ran away from his role as a leading antiwar Vietnam vet. In 1971 he spoke eloquently of the war crimes perpetrated in Vietnam, but Kerry remained silent last year about the massive civilian casualties in Iraq and the rampant torture by U.S. troops. Naomi Klein offers that Kerry “clearly made a decision that speaking about Abu Ghraib

able material documenting the massive slaughter of Iraqis.

To be fair, the antiwar movement must deal with the fact that American bliss is rarely interrupted by the suffering we inflict on others. The images from Vietnam of napalmed children and street executions did bring home the reality of America's war, which claimed the lives of 3.5 million Vietnamese. But by 1992, a study conducted by the University of Massachusetts revealed that, on average, Americans thought only 100,000 Vietnamese had died.

This may explain why the myth endures that we fought in Vietnam “with one arm tied behind our back” even though we bombed, mined and poisoned the entire country and then topped it off by bombing into oblivion another 600,000 people in neighboring Cambodia.

For the Pentagon, the main lesson of Vietnam was to exert an iron grip on the media. It has gone to great lengths to prevent images of U.S. casualties from being published, while the corporate media have done their bit by ignoring Iraqi casualties, apart from those killed by insurgents. The media also dismissed the well-documented study published last fall in *Lancet* putting Iraqi civilian deaths since March 2003 at more than 100,000, with most due to U.S. aerial attacks.

Making Americans care about genocide committed in their name is no easy task. But it may be the only way to prevent a future Vietnam or Iraq.



1: a coherent, radical critique of current anti-ecological trends

2: a reconstructive, ecological, communitarian, and ethical approach to society

*Popular education for a free society*

## 2005 SUMMER INSTITUTE:

Sustainable Design, Building & Land Use  
MAY 28-JUNE 17

Playback, Hip-Hop, Alternative Media & Social Change  
MAY 28-JUNE 5

Remaking Society: A Social Ecology Summer Intensive  
JUNE 25-JULY 24

Theoretical Inquiries in the Age of Globalization  
JULY 31-AUGUST 7

Science, Technology, the State and Globalization  
AUGUST 18-21

**YEAR ROUND OFFERINGS:**  
BA Program with Burlington College  
MA Program with Prescott College

### For more information, contact:

Institute for Social Ecology  
1118 Maple Hill Rd.  
Plainfield, VT 05667  
(802) 454-8493  
info@social-ecology.org

www.social-ecology.org

The ISE Summer Session takes place on the ISE campus in the hills of Central Vermont



# 'I'm a Radical Feminist, Not the Fun Kind'

Andrea Dworkin,  
Philosopher, Dies at 58

## The Inscrutability of Literature

Strindberg sent himself into exile. Mallarmé remained before the mirror on his writing table. Strindberg was a consummate artist, who envisioned a future. Mallarmé contemplated nothingness. Strindberg contributed pieces to the Stockholm newspapers in support of the Social Democratic party. Mallarmé understood very well where French political events of the 19th century were leading. Strindberg moved interestingly from realism and naturalism to abstraction and dream play. Mallarmé can get one through a lot. Strindberg's approach to life and art is instructive. Mallarmé's greatest strength is his obscurity — the time and study it takes to read him. Strindberg was greeted with acclaim when he returned to Sweden; he lived his last years in the Blue Tower, a new Stockholm apartment house with an elevator he declined to use. Mallarmé's literary nights at home attracted writers and artists, including the last of the symbolists, Paul Valéry. See: *August Strindberg* by Olof Lagercrantz; *Mallarmé* by Wallace Fowle.

—DONALD PANETH

I only met Andrea Dworkin once, in passing, at a Brooklyn cafe where I was parsing the *Village Voice* job listings and half-reading a Don DeLillo book that caught her eye. She was a large woman, powerful in presence even when seated. She had the same wild, Jewish hair and piercing, yet gentle eyes as my mother. Two smart women of the generation that broke out with what they used to call Women's Liberation, they had learned not to fear their own intelligence no matter who they scared. All I knew about Dworkin was that she hated men, hated sex, wanted to help the government censor porn and hated my dick, which I so very much loved. In other words, I knew nothing of Andrea Dworkin except what others had said about her. That she was ugly and bitter, the personification of female resentment.

"DeLillo always almost gets it, enough anyway to keep me hoping his next book will finally deliver," she said. I was reading *Mao II*, and this was before DeLillo finally did bring it home with *Underworld*, and so I learned that whatever '70s time warp she was stuck in, she certainly knew how to read. And then, to my surprise, I learned that she had a male partner, a slight, blond-haired man she introduced as John, who finally joined her before I returned to looking at my book, thinking, "What a hypocrite! She hates men and then sits down to coffee with some guy." They held hands across the little table, talking easy and light with each other on an average weeknight in Park Slope 12 years ago.

"I am a radical feminist," she said of herself, "not the fun kind." Still a man-child when I met her, I hadn't learned of the real power even ordinary men have when it comes to women. I was born in the early '70s, a part of the first generation to come of age after the sexual revolution — used to it, taking it for granted. We were all

All I knew about Dworkin was that she hated men, hated sex, wanted to help the government censor porn and hated my dick, which I so very much loved. In other words, I knew nothing about her.

friends, boys and girls, and without children of our own, or serious jobs and responsibilities, "the patriarchy" seemed little more than some boogiemán that timid, out-of-step feminists used to justify their own existence. And then, one by one through our early 20s, I watched

as my lovers and friends sold themselves. They stripped or whored to get through school or just to buy dope. They settled for baby-daddies not worth their time, got beaten and stayed with their abusers because, "That's just how guys are, it's more complicated than it looks," as if a bruise could be anything but what it is. I watched my sisters become what men wanted them to be. Men just like me. Because men



can. Because decades after women's liberation, everyday equality is still just a specter. I came to see why Andrea Dworkin is so feared she has to be maligned. I had to become a man to really read her.

Dworkin never said that all sex was rape, even if she saw how the cock is a weapon. She never, no matter how easily her provocations could be misread, claimed that men and women could not love each other. Care for each other. Dream out loud of a world where we don't know each other by how we hurt each other. She was a philosopher. She didn't smile when she wrote how women are hurt, beaten, raped. By men who love them. By men who hate them. By men. She wrote of sex without the giggle or sly nod women so often use to put men, and themselves, at ease. She left no easy out for the decent man to say, "Yes, all this rape is terrible — but not me."

Uninterested in pleasantries, she was intolerant of women's pain. She did not hate the victims of oppression, but the acts so mundane that no one had seen fit to mention them. The breaking of wives, the training of boys to "become men," the male right to buy women's bodies and painted smiles, pornography as "men possessing women." When Hannah Arendt generalized the banality of Nazi evil, she was applauded. Dworkin applied the same principle to our intimate lives and was spit on. For hating rape they said she hated sex.

Gloria Steinem said, "Every century, there are a handful of writers who help the human race to evolve. Andrea is one of them." Let that be her epitaph, for from her we can learn the measure of our own progress. Flawed, prone to over-extending simple truths, she was a giant.

—JED BRANDT

## CHICANO ACTIVIST AND POET Corky Gonzales, 76, Dies

In Denver, more than 2,000 people marched in Denver on April 17 to mark the death of Chicano civil rights leader Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales. A former boxer, Gonzales turned became a leader of the Chicano nationalist movement in the 1960s and 1970s. He founded Crusade for Justice, organized the Annual Chicano Youth Liberation Conference and gave the keynote speech at the newly formed La Raza Unida Party national convention in 1972. Gonzales may be best known for his poem "I Am Joaquín" / "Yo Soy Joaquín." In this manifesto of Chicano self-determination, he wrote:

*I am Joaquín.*

*I must fight And win this struggle  
for my sons,*

*and they must know from me Who  
I am.*

*Part of the blood that runs deep in me*

*Could not be vanquished by the Moors*

*I defeated them after five hundred  
years,*

*and I endured.*

*The part of blood that is mine*

*has labored endlessly five-hundred  
years under the heel of lustful*

*Europeans*

*I am still here!*

—MB

## Healing Sexual Trauma

This guide engages the survivor in the healing process with approachable exercises and consistent encouragement. As a result of sexual abuse, children learn the powerful coping mechanisms of disassociating, or mentally checking out, during abuse. Disassociating protects them from the traumatic experience that can not be processed while it is happening. This is carried into the person's adult life, preventing them from being in control of their sexuality. The book outlines tools for an effective recovery, offering the survivor lots of patience in this daunting and painful process. The process is painful because in order to unlearn disassociation, one must deal with all the emotions that were never experienced during the trauma. Haines addresses the seeming converse coping mechanisms of sexual

aversion and sexual compulsion in a balanced and frank manner, opening up the parallels in these patterns as attempts to reclaim one's sexuality before disassociation is unlearned. This book embraces the scary but liberating task of reclaiming and finding presence in the body, and connecting with suppressed emotions, offering rewards that reach beyond an empowered sex life. Haines' patient, open-minded approach makes room for each individual's means to recovery. The goal is to free sexuality from the personal history of abuse. The survivor can learn to trust themselves, reclaim their sexuality, and retain the power to express themselves sexually as they choose to.

The suggestions that Haines offers are not easy to put into practice or even approach. I offered this book to several survivors, asking

### THE SURVIVOR'S GUIDE: HOW TO HAVE AN EMPOWERED SEX LIFE AFTER CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE

By Staci Haines  
*Basic Books*

them to review it. They were all overcome with emotion in approaching the book, so the task fell on me. I have learned a deep appreciation for the struggle that survivors face in recovery. Though geared toward women who survive incest, the bulk of the book deals with practices of embodiment and sex education that are accessible to a larger audience. This book is an indispensable tool for survivors as well as anyone being sexual in a culture of rape.

—CAITLYN BENEDETTO



# The Gospel of Root-Down: Organist Jimmy Smith

Legendary jazz organist Jimmy Smith, who died in February after a career spanning more than 50 years, did for the electric organ what Charlie Christian did for the electric guitar: He introduced it to popular music and defined its basic vocabulary.

Smith, born outside Philadelphia in 1928, started out as a pianist, playing with small combos – one of which included a young sax player named John Coltrane – in the bars and clubs of Philadelphia's Black neighborhoods in the late 1940s. Signed to the Blue Note label in 1956, he was phenomenally prolific, recording more than 30 albums in the next six years – all either live or live in the studio.

That quickly established him as a jazz star, with tracks like "The Champ," his first hit; "The Sermon," a 20-minute workout; and "Back at the Chicken Shack," a reworked 1948 jump-blues song. Smith drew from an astonishing range of music – jazz standards and "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," "Peter and the Wolf" and "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag" – but a typical tune would find him patting a gently throbbing walking bass line on the instrument's pedals, while playing visceral, swinging blues, gospel and bebop licks on the keys, topping it off with rolling, tumbling trills and long, screaming high notes. He usually worked with an organ-guitar-drums-sax quartet, recording with the likes of drummer Art Blakey, guitarists Kenny Burrell and Wes Montgomery, and saxophonist Stanley Turrentine. In one landmark 1960 session, he cut two albums in one day.

Those records became part of the soundtrack for clubbing, chilling and partying in both the jazz world – much more a part of popular and bohemian culture in the '50s than it is now – and in urban Black America. They also established the electric organ as a crucial instrument in jazz, rock, blues and especially the gospel-soaked sounds of '60s soul. Smith didn't get much critical acclaim, though. In an era

when Coltrane and Miles Davis were becoming revered icons, his music was often dismissed as commercial "soul-jazz." He recorded less often after 1970, as jazz declined in popularity and the electric piano and synthesizer eclipsed the organ, but he experienced a revival in the '90s. He died a week before his last album came out.

Jimmy Smith was a supremely innovative and soulful musician who grew out of grassroots culture. Struggling against oppres-

sion is essential, but it can't sustain your spirit the way a strong community and culture can. Yes, any musician who makes a living has to be at least partially commercial, but this kind of grassroots culture has been mostly washed away by everything from high urban real-estate prices to the pervasive dominance of corporate entertainment.

There are times when even the most hardcore activist needs a break from politics. When you want something to dance to or chill to when you come home from work, or a soundtrack for love-making, are you going to put on a discussion of the Bush regime's latest abominations – or are you going to put on something that feels good and speaks to your soul?

"The best jazz, blues, bebop, funk, it's an expression of sex," Smith told *Keyboard* magazine in an interview published a few weeks before his death. "You can't say out loud what you wanna do, but you can say it with the instrument. The music is nothing without that energy."

—STEVEN WISHNIA



ILLUSTRATION: MAC MCGILL

# How to Stop A Cancerous Economy

It's the reigning economic and political orthodoxy, a faith embraced by the right, social democrats and communists. The view that economic growth is good and always to be desired. It is also a false religion, according to Clive Hamilton, the Executive Director of the public interest think tank, The Australia Institute. In his book *Growth Fetish*, Hamilton sets forth a compelling and radical critique of the ideology of economic growth and its real-world manifestation, consumer society, and attempts to lay the groundwork for a post-growth society.

Some time ago, economic growth stopped improving the well-being of the inhabitants of the developed world, where overconsumption and waste, rather than deprivation, are the norm. While many economists assume that "more economic growth improves social well-being, and that more income improves individual well-being," those who have bothered to test the assumption – usually non-economists – have

## GROWTH FETISH

By Clive Hamilton  
Pluto Press, 2003

found otherwise.

Drawing on various studies, Hamilton concludes that once a nation achieves a certain level of material well-being (perhaps around \$10,000 per capita), there ceases to be any correlation between additional income and self-satisfaction. It is not further happiness, but rather growing levels of depression, obesity, stress, overwork and alienation that are the hallmarks of consumer society.

Indeed, consumer capitalism cannot survive without dissatisfaction, Hamilton argues, for if people were satisfied, what would impel further growth? So dissatisfaction must be manufactured; that is the "indispensable role of the advertising industry." Contrary to the idealized neoliberal view, we do not live in a world in which rational economic beings with pre-existing preferences choose from available

options to satisfy those preferences, but one in which the massive resources and creative talent of the advertising industry constantly create new "needs."

It is not only neoliberalism that comes under attack. Hamilton takes particular aim at the Third Way proponents, foremost Tony Blair and Bill Clinton. With the end of the Cold War, the so-called establishment Left embraced the gospel that the purpose of government is to increase economic growth and that private markets are the best way to achieve it, and thus embraced neoliberalism.

While the Third Way, that "post-modern opium of the people," was assisting in the triumphal ascendancy of neoliberalism, a true radical critique began emanating from some environmentalists.

They reject one of the principal tenets of growth fetishism, the commoditized view of the world, wherein the sole function of the natural world is to provide material to satisfy human desire, and which,

consequently, fictitiously removes humanity from its own ecology. It is to environmentalism where the left must turn in order to escape the chimera of growth fetishism.

Hamilton concludes by suggesting policy measures to jumpstart the "transition to a post-growth society," such as reducing work hours and mandating that businesses adhere to ecological sustainability. While many of his suggestions seem sensible and could serve as a core of a new political program for the developed world's Left, they are presented only in abbreviated form. Also, it is not altogether clear that legislative measures are the first step toward a fundamental societal transformation, which more likely would begin with the consolidation of a social movement that rejects consumerism and commodification. Nevertheless, Hamilton's work constitutes an important contribution in the debate on how to move beyond consumer society before it collapses under its own weight.

—JUAN C. ORDÓÑEZ

STUDENT RESIS  
Revolution in the Air  
ell hooks FEMIN

## bluestockings

radical bookstore | activist center |  
fair trade cafe  
172 Allen St. • 212.777.6028  
bluestockings.com

TUESDAY, APRIL 26TH @ 7PM

\$3 to \$5 Suggested

Performance: Women's  
Poetry Jam & Open-Mike

Featuring: Jeanne Marie Beaumont and Lisa Rhoades  
Jeanne Marie Beaumont's writes poetry about wonders and terrors while keeping readers on their toes with her fondness for inversions and sly perversions. Lisa Rhoades reads from her award-winning book "Strange Gravity" in which ordinary people and ordinary actions are lit with visionary imagination. Women's Poetry Jam is hosted by Vittoria Repetto, the hardest working guinea butch dyke poet on the lower east side. Open mike sign-up starts at 7 pm, so come and deliver (up to) 8 minutes of your poetry, prose, songs, and spoken word.

APRIL 30TH @ 7PM - FREE

Social: Community Supported  
Agriculture

Organic produce doesn't have to be expensive, and neither you nor farmers have to be at the mercy of the corporate influence on the food chain. Community Supported Agriculture (or "CSA") is a collaboration between farmers and eaters (that's you!). The Stanton Street Settlement CSA is signing up members to purchase shares in this year's harvest. Please join us for an informational session about our CSA.

to be HOSTILE



BOOKS | COFFEE |  
DEMOCRACY

VOXPOPNET.NET |

718.940.2084  
1022 Cortelyou Road,  
Brooklyn

books • coffee • democ

The NEW  
InstaBook  
Technology  
NOW IN NYC!

Vox Pop prints  
your  
paperback BOOK,  
right here  
in our bookstore

BOOKS: kids | 9/11 | anarchist  
green-capitalist | marxist | feminist  
black nationalist





**TELL MAYOR BLOOMBERG:**

# STOP RAISING OUR RENTS!

**FRIDAY APRIL 22ND**

9:00AM

City Planning Commission

Rent Guidelines Board

22 Reade Street

[between Chambers and Duane Streets]

**SUNDAY MAY 1ST**

2:00PM

Mayor Bloomberg's

Manhattan Residence

17 East 79th Street

(between Fifth and Madison Avenues)

New York City's Rent Guidelines Board, appointed by Mayor Bloomberg, has been consistently biased towards landlords and has voted for excessive rent increases that affect more than 2 million rent-stabilized tenants throughout New York City. It is crucial, now more than ever, that tenants come together to demand an end to unfair rent hikes!

LET THE MAYOR KNOW WE  
OPPOSE UNFAIR RENT INCREASES  
AND HIS APPOINTMENTS OF BIASED  
RENT GUIDELINES BOARD MEMBERS.

**Protest at the RGB  
and the Mayor's House!**



SPONSORED BY MET COUNCIL ON HOUSING, COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS, AND TENANTS & NEIGHBORS,

**FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO:**

**[WWW.METCOUNCIL.NET](http://WWW.METCOUNCIL.NET), [WWW.COALITIONFORTHEHOMELESS.ORG](http://WWW.COALITIONFORTHEHOMELESS.ORG), [WWW.TANDN.ORG](http://WWW.TANDN.ORG)**